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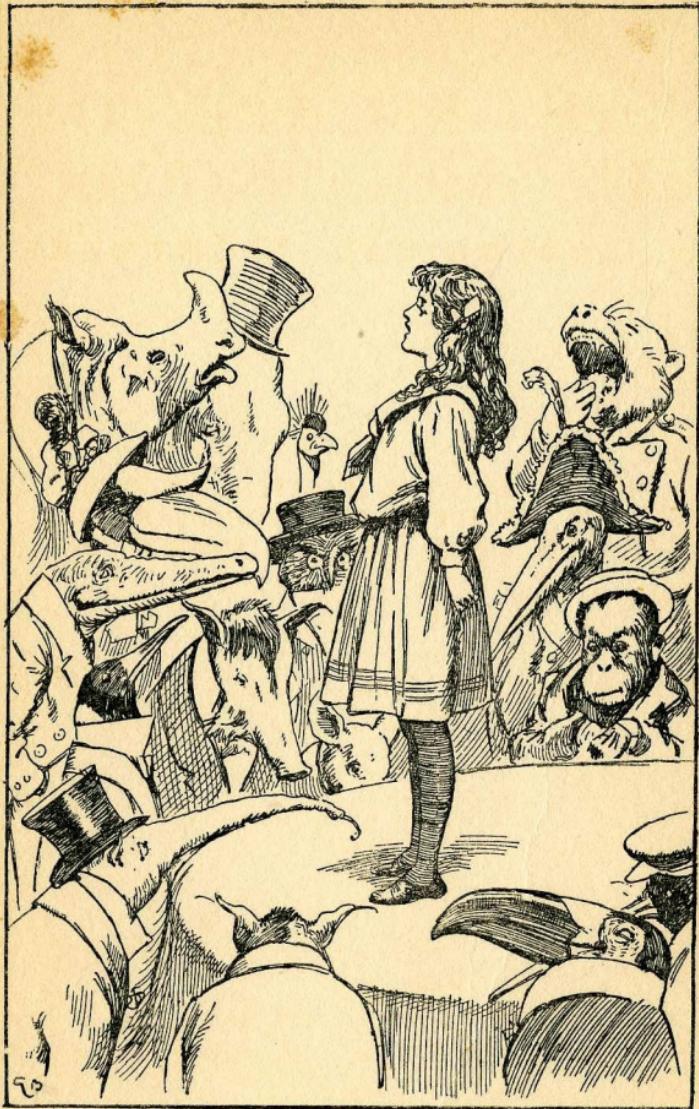
TO THE
ZOO

MCLEOD
AT HOME



G·E·FARROW

H.P.



The Recitation

THE ESCAPE OF THE MULLINGONG

A ZOOLOGICAL NIGHTMARE

BY

G. E. FARROW

AUTHOR OF "THE WALLYPUG OF WHY"
"THE LITTLE PANJANDRUM'S DODO"
"BAKER MINOR AND THE DRAGON" &c.

WITH FIFTY-EIGHT ILLUSTRATIONS
BY GORDON BROWNE R.I.

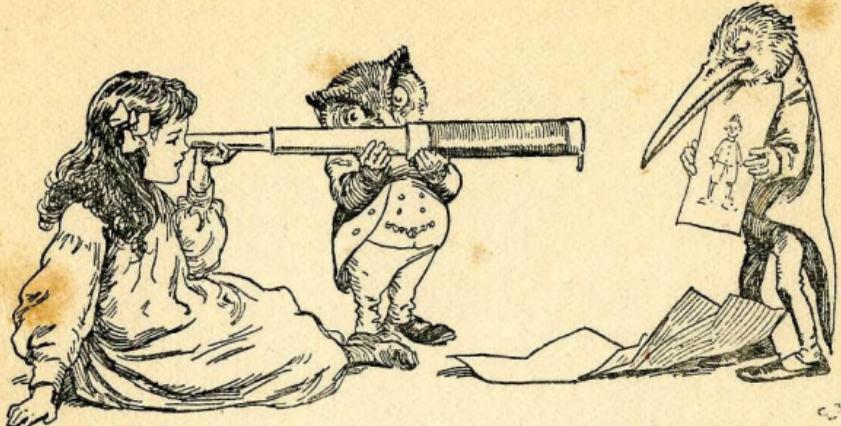
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CHAPTER ONE



AN INVITATION

OF course you will say at once, "What is a Mullingong?" for I don't suppose—unless you happen to have been to Australia—that you have ever even so much as heard the name before. And that was exactly Girlie's position, until she had been through the extraordinary adventures of which I am going to tell you.

Girlie lived near Regent's Park, so near, indeed, that from her bed-room window, when the wind was in a certain direction, she could distinctly hear the laughing hyenas and other noisy animals when they made a disturbance, as they frequently did.

Living so near as she did, she was often able to pay a visit to that interesting place, and, in fact, became quite familiar with many

of the curious animals which are gathered there from all parts of the world, and made many friends amongst them; so when any new creatures were sent to the Zoo, Girlie's father would be sure to read in the paper the announcement of their arrival, and then, as soon as possible, Girlie and her mamma would pay a visit to the Park and endeavour to make the acquaintance of the strangers.

On the particular evening on which my story opens, Girlie had gone up to her room in a great state of excitement, for she had heard her father reading in the evening paper about a strange, new creature called a Mullingong, which had been sent to the Zoo; and although she had begged very hard indeed, her father—who was a great tease—would not tell her what the creature with the strange-sounding name was like.

“No,” he said, “you must get Mother to take you to the park to-morrow, and find out for yourself.”

So Girlie had puzzled her head about it all the while she was getting into bed.

"I wonder," she thought, "if it's a bird, or an animal, or a reptile—Mul-lin-gong sounds something like a reptile, I think."

And she was still considering the matter when she fell asleep.

I don't quite know how long it was before a noise in the direction of her dressing-table woke her up, but the moon was shining in so brightly at the open window that the room was bathed in a flood of light, and all the objects in it were as plain as in daytime. To her amazement, a tall bird was standing before the glass gravely using her hair-brush, and posturing and prinking before its reflection in the mirror in a most absurd way.

Girlie sat up in bed and rubbed her eyes.

Yes, there was no doubt about it. It was really a bird, with rather long legs and a curious tuft of long white quills sticking out at the back of its head. How it had got into her bed-room was more than she could imagine, unless it had flown in at the open window.

What was best to be done? Girlie thought she would like to catch it, but it was really

such a large bird that she was a little afraid of attempting it. Supposing the creature objected? While she was still wondering what she ought to do, the bird turned round, and immediately dropped the brush which it had been using.

"Oh, you're awake at last, are you?" he said, coming towards the bed.

Girlie gasped with astonishment.

"Y-e-e-e-s," she faltered, "but—but—"

"Would you mind telling me your proper name, then?" continued the bird, apparently not noticing her confusion. "I've got to post you a letter which I've got in my pocket, and I'm not quite certain how it ought to be addressed, you know."

"A letter for me! in his pocket!" thought Girlie, and, looking down, she discovered that the bird had a little leather wallet swung over his shoulder, from which several envelopes protruded.

"Well, if you've really got a letter for me," said Girlie, mastering her astonishment as well as she was able, "hadn't you better



"Gravely using her hair-brush"

give it to me instead of posting it, since you are here?"

"Dear me! Of course! I never thought of that," said the bird, scratching among the quills at the back of his head. "I suppose it would do nearly as well. I generally send them by mail though; but as it's going to begin in about half an hour, perhaps you wouldn't get it in time if I sent it through the post."

"What's going to begin in half an hour?" asked Girlie curiously.

"Read your letter and you'll see," said the bird, searching among the package of envelopes, and at last handing one towards her addressed "Miss Girlie".

"Beautiful writing, isn't it?" asked the bird, gazing at it affectionately such a long while, before handing it to her, that Girlie grew quite impatient. She was so excited as to what it could possibly be about that I'm afraid she didn't trouble to answer the bird's question, but hastily tore open the envelope.

THE ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS,
REGENT'S PARK.

Mr. and Mrs. LEO present their compliments to Miss GIRLIE, and request the pleasure of her company at a Garden-Party to be held at midnight in above Park, to meet Mr. MULLINGONG, the distinguished visitor from Australia.

R.S. V.P.

“Oh! How perfectly lovely!” cried Girlie, clapping her hands. “Just what I wanted to do—to see the Mullingong. Who or what is he, do you know?” she cried excitedly.

“No, I can’t say I do,” said the bird; “but why they are making this ridiculous fuss about him I can’t conceive. I’m sure, the amount of extra work I’ve had to do, sending out invitations and that sort of thing, nobody would believe: I’m the Secretary, you know.”

“Oh, yes! The Secretary bird; I must have often seen you at the Zoo. Do you know, I thought your face seemed familiar, somehow.”



"Mr. and Mrs. Leo present their compliments"

"H'm, yes; it's a pleasant face, isn't it?" said the bird, going up to the glass and smirking at himself. "Well, now I must be off," he cried; "there's no end of things to do. I suppose I may say that you will come?" he added.

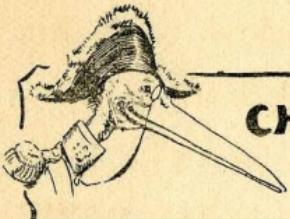
"Oh, yes, certainly!" exclaimed Girlie. "I shall like it above all things."

And so, Mr. Secretary, with a parting glance at himself in the glass, gave Girlie a little familiar nod, and, stretching out his long legs, flew out at the window with his little leather wallet dangling behind him.

Girlie hastily scrambled out of bed, and, going to the wardrobe, got out her pretty white dress, which she decided was just the thing in which to go to the garden-party.

She was soon dressed, and with her eyes sparkling with excitement, and her cheeks rosy red from the same cause, she looked a very pretty little girl indeed.

"Ah, I think you'll do!" cried a critical voice at the window, and, turning, Girlie saw Mr. Secretary standing on the windowsill, with his head thrust into the room. "I've just flown back to ask you to bring your own mug," he added. "The keepers are so mean, they have locked everything up, and there may be a little difficulty with the crockery, you know; so perhaps it will be advisable to bring your own. Good-bye! See you later." And he was off again.



CHAPTER TWO



THE PIXIES' GIFT

TAKE my own mug!" thought Girlie; "dear me, that means going down into the kitchen, I suppose, unless—Oh, yes! of course, I can get my little silver one out of the pantry; that will do even better." And no sooner had Girlie thought this than she crept, as softly as she could, out of the room and down the thickly carpeted stairs.

She scarcely dared to breathe, for she was very anxious not to waken anybody, lest, as was indeed highly probable, they might object to her leaving the house at that time of the night.

It was not quite so light downstairs, but Girlie had no difficulty in finding her way to

the pantry, and as soon as she got there she espied her little silver mug standing on the second shelf.

She had to get up on the plate-chest to reach it, and had just taken it into her hand, and was getting down again, when she heard an impatient little voice calling out:

“What are you doing? Put me down instantly!” In her fright she nearly dropped the mug, for the voice seemed to proceed from inside it.

As it was, she set it down on the plate-chest and looked about her curiously.

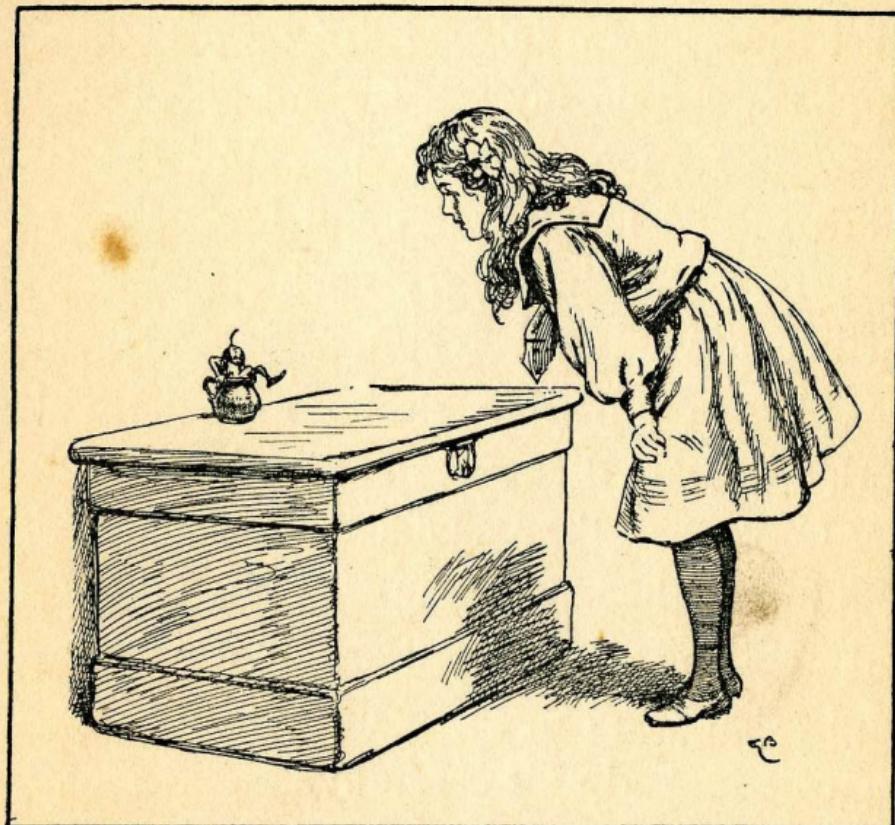
Not a creature was in sight, until presently, after a great deal of struggling, a little man, scarcely bigger than one's finger, emerged from the mug itself. He carried a piece of wash-leather, which was nearly as big as he was, and he was covered all over with a kind of red powder.

“Well, aren't you ashamed of yourself, disturbing me at my work in this manner?” he began angrily.

“I'm sure I'm very sorry, sir,” said Girlie

humblly. "You see, I didn't know you were in the mug, or I'd have er—er——"

"What?" demanded the little man, stand-



"A little man emerged from the mug"

ing with his arms akimbo and his head on one side.

"Well, really, I think I should have asked you to be so good as to get out, you know," said Girlie, who was a little puzzled as to

how she should answer the little man, for he snapped her up so very suddenly, and seemed so particularly angry.

"Oh, you would, would you?" said he. "Whether I had finished my work or not, I suppose. Upon my word, *some* people have *no* consideration for others." And the tiny fellow sniffed impatiently, and looked so exactly like a little, angry cock-sparrow that Girlie could scarcely keep from laughing.

"I beg your pardon, sir, but what particular work were you doing?" she asked.

"Look here!" exclaimed the mannikin, pointing to the silver mug. "Just take it up and examine it, and tell me if it is not so bright that you can see your face in it."

Girlie looked at it carefully.

"It certainly *is* brighter than I ever remember seeing it before," she said.

The little man looked slightly mollified.

"Oh, you admit it, do you?" he said. "Well, it wouldn't have been like *that* if I hadn't been at work on it, I can tell you. He had to go home to-day to see his poor

old mother, who is ill, and he didn't get back in time to do the silver properly, so, as he is a very good-tempered man, and does his work carefully, as a rule, we are helping him."

"Whom are you speaking of, please?" asked Girlie.

"Charles," was the reply.

Charles was the man-servant, and Girlie remembered hearing that he had been given a holiday that afternoon.

"I'm sure it's very kind of you," said she; "but are there many others?" she enquired, peeping about. "You spoke as though there might have been several of you."

"The rest are inside," said the little fellow, pointing down towards his feet.

"In the plate-chest?" asked Girlie wonderingly.

"Yes," was the reply. "Put your ear against it and listen."

Girlie did as she was directed, and heard a terrible commotion going on inside the chest. The various silver articles inside were rattling

against each other, and a perfect hubbub of voices arose, seemingly all speaking at once.

"Why, whoever are they?" cried Girlie.

The little man stamped his foot three times on the chest, and immediately up through the lid came a number of quaint little figures no bigger than himself.

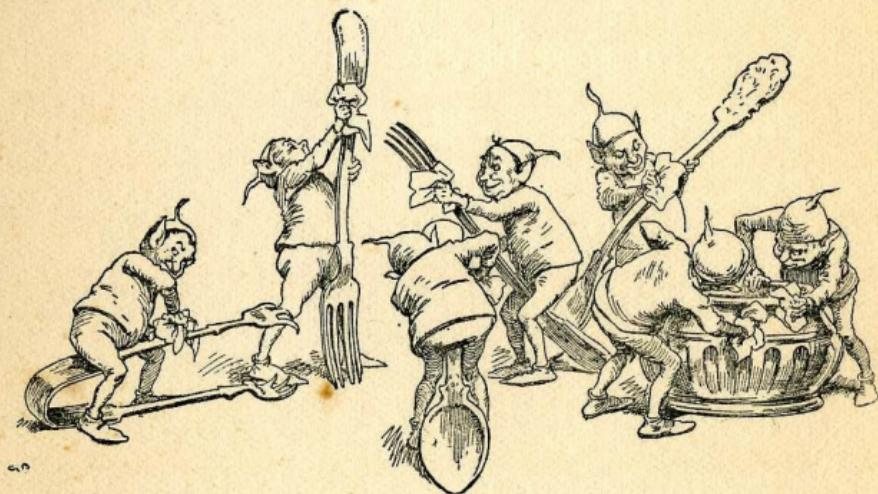
Some were sitting astride forks, others were mounted upon dessert-spoons, and one little chap was struggling manfully with a pair of sugar-tongs, which were larger than himself.

They were all polishing away busily at the various articles, and singing as they worked:

As they sang the last "Ho! ho!" they all

suddenly sat down in a semicircle, and polished away at the silver more vigorously than ever, staring at Girlie with their curious great eyes, which looked far too big for their heads.

"Oh!" exclaimed Girlie. "Are you really



"Polishing away, and singing as they worked"

Pixies? I've read such a lot about them, but I've never seen any before. I'm so glad to meet you. You help all the good people in the night, don't you? All the tired servants, who try hard to get through their work, however much it may be; and the little children who help their mothers and fathers, and are kind to their brothers and sisters; so that when they wake up in the morning, thinking

what a lot there is for them to do, they find part of it done already?"

The Pixies all nodded their heads at the same time.

"And all the naughty people you hinder in their work? Blunt lazy work-people's tools, and rumple untidy people's boxes and things, and make them more untidy than ever?"

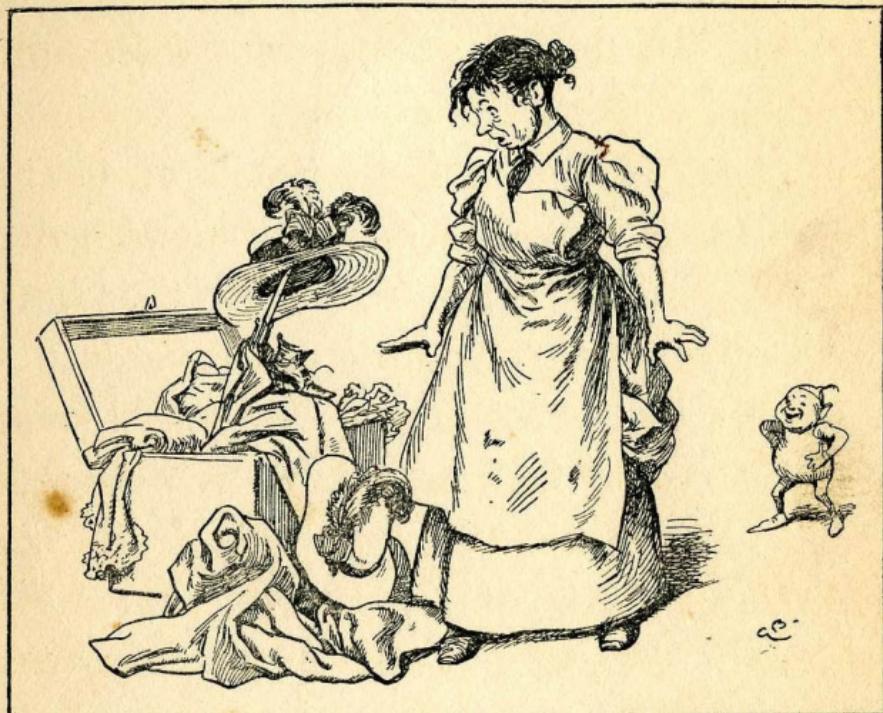
The Pixies all solemnly nodded again.

"Oh! and, of course—I've just remembered," cried Girlie, speaking in a state of great excitement, "anyone who really sees a Pixie can have one wish—whatever it is—granted. Oh, may I—*may* I have a wish, please?"

The Pixies consulted together in whispers, then one of them came forward and said "You may have *three*."

"Three wishes!" cried Girlie excitedly; "do you really mean it? Can I have anything I like in the whole world? Oh, how delightful! But I must be careful, mustn't I, not to wish for anything foolish?"

The Pixies seemed greatly amused at this speech, and dug each other in the ribs, and capered about gleefully for a moment, then



"Rumple untidy people's boxes"

suddenly returned to their work and appeared anxious to make up for lost time, for they rubbed away more busily than ever.

Girlie wondered what could have caused them so much amusement.

"But, dear me!" she exclaimed, suddenly remembering the invitation she had received;

"I am afraid I must be going. I am invited to a garden-party at the Zoo, and I ought to be there by midnight." She said this quite importantly, for she thought it was a very grand thing to be going out at that hour.

"It's past that now," declared one of the Pixies, drawing a tiny little watch out of his pocket. "Look!" he cried, holding it up for Girlie's inspection.

"Why, I can scarcely see the watch itself, let alone the hands," said Girlie, laughing softly; "it's such a tiny little thing."

"We'll soon alter that," said the Pixie, giving the watch a shake. As he continued shaking it, the watch grew in size, till at last it was nearly as big as the little man himself, and Girlie could see quite well that it was ten minutes past twelve.

"Oh," she exclaimed in dismay, "I shall be late! I wish I were there now."

There was sudden darkness, and a curious feeling that she was being rapidly whirled through the air, and in an instant Girlie

found herself just inside the well-known entrance to the Gardens.

She felt a trifle bewildered, just at first, and then, after thinking a moment, realized that one of the three wishes offered her by the Pixies had been granted. "And I was going to wish something so very important with each of the three chances," she thought regretfully. "Never mind, there are two more left, and I am here anyhow, and shall not be so very late after all." And Girlie hurried down the path towards the Lion House.





CHAPTER THREE

A PARTICULAR PORCUPINE

GIRLIE hurried towards the Lion House.

"For," she argued, "the Mr. and Mrs. Leo, on the invitation, must mean Mr. and Mrs. Lion, I suppose."

You see, Girlie knew enough of Latin to understand this.

"I hope, though," she went on musingly, "they won't be out of their cages; for I'm sure I should be terribly frightened of meeting live lions unless they were in a cage. I don't suppose, however, that they would wish to do me any harm, as they have invited me to their party. They certainly wouldn't wish to *eat* me; it would be so *very* impolite!"

She was rambling on in this way to herself, when she heard a curious scratching sound

proceeding from one of the side paths, and on going a little out of her way, she could see that a rather large Porcupine was hurry-along, muttering and grumbling to himself, and that the long quills with which he was covered, and which were dragging on the ground behind him, had caused the noise which she had noticed.

Girlie hurried up to him. "I am certainly not going to be frightened at a Porcupine," she thought. "I suppose he must have broken loose somehow."

The Porcupine was still chattering to himself in a nervous, discontented way when she reached his side.

"Such a bother," he was saying; "just as I had arranged it so nicely too, and now I haven't time to go back for any more. I shall be late as it is, I am afraid."

Girlie hurried past, and turned round to catch a glimpse of the strange little creature.

"Bless me!" he cried; "there goes a child; perhaps she has some. Here! Stop, stop!" he cried.

Girlie turned round and walked slowly back again.

"How does my hair look?" demanded the creature. "Am I very untidy?"

"Well," replied Girlie, who could not help smiling, for the creature's long quills were sticking about in all directions, and he certainly could not be truthfully described as being neat in appearance. "You see, those quills must be so very difficult to arrange, and—"

"*Don't* call them quills!" cried the Porcupine angrily, stamping his foot, which was encased in a very neat little patent-leather shoe. "As though I were a bird!" he added scornfully. "Whoever heard of an *animal* with quills? It's hair. Don't you see how beautifully I've parted it? I fixed it down with hair-pins," the creature explained, "only they've most of them come out. I suppose you haven't one or two you could spare?" he added, looking up enviously at Girlie's wavy hair.

"No, I don't wear them," said Girlie,



G. B.

"Don't call them quills!"

laughing. "You see, I haven't begun to wear my hair up yet, so I don't use any."

"Oh!" said the Porcupine discontentedly. "How old are you then?" he added, as an after-thought.

"Nearly twelve," replied Girlie, who began to think the little animal rather rude.

"Oh!" ejaculated the Porcupine again. "And is it considered the correct thing to wear the hair loose when you're as old as that?"

"Of course!" Girlie answered simply.

"Well, I'm not nearly twelve yet, so I sha'n't bother any more about mine, then," declared the Porcupine.

"Are you going to the garden-party?" asked Girlie, who thought it was time to change the subject.

"Of course! Why not?" demanded the little creature, setting up his bristles and looking so very fierce that Girlie was quite alarmed.

"Oh, there's no reason why you should

not go that I know of!" she hastened to say.
"I only asked for information."

"Well, you wouldn't ask for any other reason, would you?" snapped the creature.
"Are *you* going?" he asked, a little more graciously.

"Yes," said Girlie, "and I must hurry on, if you don't mind excusing me, for it's very late, I'm afraid."

"We may as well walk together," suggested the Porcupine, coming closer, so close, in fact, that his quills brushed against Girlie, and made her give a frightened little gasp.

"Take my arm," said the creature; "it will make us look more important."

Girlie hesitated an instant, but the Porcupine began to look angry again, so she thought she had better humour him; though it *was* most uncomfortable to have to reach down to take the little creature's arm, and at the same time to avoid the long quills which every moment threatened to prick her.

"It must be very awkward for you, not knowing whether you are a bird or an

animal," said her companion suddenly, after a long silence,—for Girlie had been puzzling her brain as to what would be the most interesting topic of conversation upon which to enter with the Porcupine, and had just come to the conclusion that there ought to be a little book like "Aids to Conversation (French)" which she knew her elder sister possessed, suggesting appropriate subjects upon which to converse with various animals. She was just thinking how funny it would sound to say to Fluffy, her little kitten: "Has it been a good season for mice?" or "Won't you take a seat on my lap? you must be fatigued from running after your tail for so long a time."

"I beg your pardon," she answered. "I'm afraid I didn't quite catch what you said."

"I said it must be awkward for you not to know whether you're a bird or an animal," repeated the Porcupine irritably.

"Why, I haven't the slightest doubt on the subject," said Girlie, smiling. "Of course I know I'm not a bird—and," she

added, after a moment's consideration, "I'm equally certain that I'm a kind of animal."

"I'm not so sure of that," retorted the Porcupine. "You don't seem to have a sufficient number of legs, somehow, to be an animal."

"I've two," rejoined Girlie, in surprise.

"Yes, that's just it," declared the Porcupine. "I've never known a proper animal with less than four. Now a bird has only two—at least I've never seen one with more,—so I shouldn't wonder if you were a kind of bird after all. And that brings us round to what I remarked before, that it must be very absurd not to know properly whether you're a bird or an animal."

"But I tell you——," began Girlie, when an enormous and very distinguished-looking bird, in levee dress and with a sword dangling between his legs, came clattering down the path.

"Ah, the Adjutant!" observed the Porcupine. "We were just discussing," he said,



"R-e-a-ll-y!"

as the bird was about to pass them, "whether this young person was a bird or an animal."

The Adjutant paused, and fixed into his eye a single eye-glass, or monocle, which he wore attached to a black cord, then drawled out in an affected voice :

"R-e-ally!" staring hard, first at one, then the other, "I c-can't say—don't you know,—I've ah—nevah thought about it—ah, in fact —ah, I nevah think about anything—ah." And he began to giggle in a foolish manner.

"Awfully stupid to think—ah, don't you know," he went on; "takes up such a lot of time, and it's no use after you've done it—ah. By the by—ah, sha'n't we be awfully late for the garden-party? I—ah—I've had a how-wible accident, you know, and it's upset me —ah—vewwy much."

"Dear me!" cried Girlie in great concern; "what happened?"

"Oh! I—ah—lost my best collah-stud, don't you know, and I was vewwy nearly not able to come at all to-night."

"Is that all?" Girlie laughed. "Why, I was afraid it was something serious."

"It was sewious," declared the Adjutant, dropping his eye-glass and clutching after it vaguely with one pinion, "vewwy sewious indeed—and then I couldn't get a cab—ah—anywhere—howwid place this for that sort of thing,—and so I've had to walk all the way from—ah—my bungalow."

"Well, now you are here we'd better step along pretty lively," the Porcupine grunted; "don't you think so?"

"Well, yes—ah,—perhaps we had," replied the Adjutant. "Won't you take—ah—my pinion—ah?" he said to Girlie in a patronizing way. She hesitated a moment, then thought it best to accept the offer, and so, arm in arm with her strange companions, she continued her journey towards the Lion House.



CHAPTER FOUR



THE PERSON WHO DIDN'T KNOW HER OWN NAME

A SOUND of strange music in the distance caused them to quicken their pace.

"There! the band has commenced," said the Porcupine; "I knew we should be late."

"I don't think—ah—it weally mattahs," said the Adjutant wearily. "It's rathah bettah form to be a little late, you know; besides, we are not by any means the last to arrive; I can heah some—ah—people behind us."

The Porcupine turned round. "It's the Elephant family," said he. "My goodness! What swells!"

Girlie looked round eagerly, and saw

three Elephants, two large ones and a baby. They were certainly dressed in a remarkable manner.

The baby Elephant wore a large sunbonnet and an apron; the father a pair of trousers which were much too large for him, and which seemed rather troublesome to walk in, a blue tail-coat with brass buttons, and an old-fashioned beaver hat; the mother was resplendent in a brightly-coloured gown and a straw bonnet gay with ribbons and flowers. They evidently recognized Girlie, for they nodded pleasantly to her as they passed, and the baby Elephant said, in a funny, squeaky little voice :

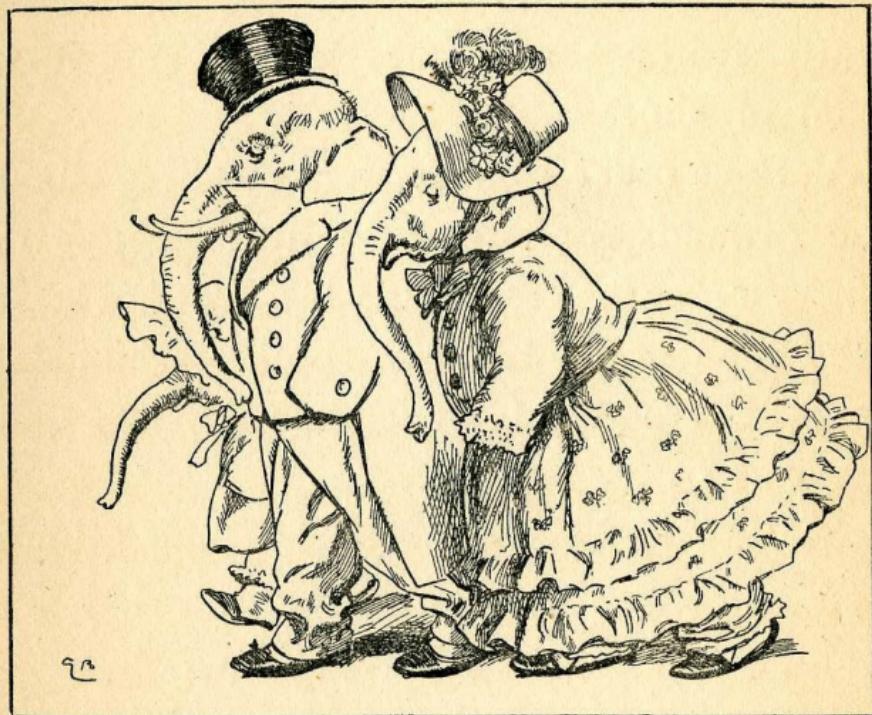
“Oh, Mamma dear, that’s the little girl who——”

“H-u-s-h, my dear!” interrupted the mother. “You musn’t make remarks;” and the three hurried on in front.

By this time they had nearly reached the Lion House, and the music, which they had noticed, grew more and more distinct every moment, till presently they turned the corner

and came upon the strangest sight which Girlie had ever seen.

On the band-stand a number of animals were playing various instruments: a couple



"Two large ones and a baby"

of Seals were banging away on drums—"just as they did at Barnum's," said Girlie, delightedly clapping her hands;—a Hippopotamus was tootling at a big trombone; a Chimpanzee and an Orang-outang were scraping away at two big violoncellos; while

a Jerboa and a Chinchilla stood on their hind-legs, striking triangles.

A Camel, with a very serious face, was conducting. At least he was waving a baton about in an erratic manner and gazing intently at the same time at some music in front of him.

Various other animals were strolling about the grounds, or sitting in little groups on chairs under the trees; and last, but not least, the Lion and Lioness, both fashionably dressed, stood side by side receiving their guests as they arrived.

Mr. Secretary-bird was bustling about, and, directly he saw Girlie, hurried forward.

“Come along,” he said; “you’re all late. There have been several enquiries about *you* already. Go and pay your respects to the host and hostess and then come back to me. There’s a Toucan, over there under the trees, who is very anxious to make your acquaintance.”

Girlie was a little flurried at having to

go up to a real live Lion; but, overcoming her fear with an effort, she stepped forward.

An Alligator wearing a kind of green livery



"Just as they did at Barnum's"

came hurrying up and held out a silver salver.

"Where's your card?" he asked breathlessly. "You haven't been announced yet."

"I—I am afraid I haven't one," stammered Girlie.

The Alligator looked blank.

“Shocking want of manners!” he declared.
“What’s your name?”

“Girlie,” was the reply; “at least that’s what I’m called at home. Of course it’s not my real name.”

“Don’t prevaricate,” snapped the Alligator; “is it your name or not?”

“Well, yes,” said Girlie, “but——”

“The Adjutant, Ebenezer Porcupine, Esquire,—and—a person who doesn’t know her own name,” announced the Alligator in a loud voice.

Of course everybody turned round and stared, and even the musicians left off and gazed curiously at Girlie, as being the person who didn’t know her own name, making her blush terribly, and feel very nervous and confused.

The Lioness hurried forward and held out a paw.

“*So pleased to see you; so good of you to come,*” she said effusively; and immediately turned to welcome some other guests, while the Lion, running a paw through his-mane,

of which he was evidently very proud, came up and spoke to Girlie in a very gruff, husky voice.



"Where's your card?"

"Delighted to see you," he said. "We are looking forward to your singing very much; so glad you were able to come."

"I'm afraid I don't quite understand," faltered Girlie.

"Oh, yes! you're going to sing, you know," the Lion rejoined amiably; "it's down on the programme. Or is it a recitation?" he added, referring to a gilt-edged card which he drew from his pocket.

"But——" began Girlie.

"Oh, yes, it is a recitation, I see!" interrupted the Lion; "'The Pelican and the Pie'. I'm sure it will be sweetly pretty. Dear me, yes, and a solo on the bagpipes later; why what a highly accomplished young lady you must be! I shall look forward with great interest to your performance; but now you must excuse me, please, I see some fresh guests are arriving. I hope you'll enjoy yourself." And with a pleasant nod the Lion hurried off, leaving Girlie in a state of great bewilderment.

From what the Lion had said, she was evidently expected to contribute to the entertainment by reciting 'The Pelican and the Pie'.



"We are looking forward to your singing"

"Why, I've never even heard of it," thought the poor child, her head in a perfect whirl; "and as for playing upon the bagpipes," she went on, "I'm certain I could never do *that*—there must be some mistake."

"Come along," said the Secretary-bird, hurrying up just at this moment. "I told you to come back to me, and here you are standing still and gaping about you, as though you had lost your wits."

"Oh, *have* you a programme, please?" cried Girlie.

"A programme!" said Mr. Secretary-bird, in surprise. "Of course I have! what do you want to know for?"

"Am I expected to recite, or anything, do you know?" asked Girlie anxiously.

"Oh, yes! that's in the *first* part, you know," replied the Secretary-bird, referring to his card. "In the second part you are to sing and perform upon the musical glasses, and give a conjuring entertainment to finish up with."

"But not *me*," expostulated Girlie. "I'm not supposed to be going to do all these things surely?"

"Of course you are!" ejaculated the Secretary-bird. "Why not?"

"But—but I don't know in the least how to play upon the musical glasses, or the bagpipes either; and I'm sure I couldn't do any conjuring tricks if I tried ever so long," cried poor Girlie, who was getting terribly alarmed at the prospect before her.

"That's nothing to do with me," the Secretary-bird retorted, shrugging his shoulders. "All I know is, you're down on the programme for those things, and you'll be expected to *do* them."

"But how *can* I do them if I don't know how?" said poor Girlie, stamping her foot, and looking hopelessly perplexed.

"I can't say, I'm sure," Mr. Secretary-bird answered with a condescending air. "The recitation is first," he added, referring to his card; "I suppose you can manage *that* all right?"

"I'm supposed to say 'The Pelican and the Pie', I believe, am I not?" asked Girlie.



"You'll be expected to do them"

The Secretary-bird nodded.

"Well," said Girlie with emphasis, "I've never even heard of it. Do you think

it would matter if I recited something else instead? I might manage ‘Mary had a Little Lamb’, you know, or ‘The Wreck of the Hesperus’.”

“They don’t like the programme altered,” the Secretary-bird explained dubiously. “Why don’t you recite ‘The Wreck of the Hesperus’, and call it ‘The Pelican and the Pie’? I don’t suppose anybody would know the difference, much. And, if I were you, I should try and learn the bagpipes somehow; the other people won’t like to be disappointed, I can tell you. But come, let’s go and see the Toucan; he wants to see you particularly, and perhaps he will be able to suggest a way out of the difficulty, though, candidly, I don’t see how you are going to get out of it.

“People shouldn’t go to parties if they can’t do anything,” he added gruffly.

“I can do *some* things,” protested Girlie, “though I never expected to be asked to play the bagpipes, or the musical glasses. Why, I don’t even know what they are!”

"Oh, it will be all right! I dare say they are easy enough to play," remarked the Secretary-bird, hurrying Girlie off in the direction of the Toucan.

Girlie tried to persuade herself that this might be the case—though she had hard work to think so really,—as she somewhat ruefully followed Mr. Secretary to the shrubbery.



CHAPTER FIVE



ABOUT NINEPENCE AND A PROPOSAL

THERE he is, over there," said the Secretary-bird, pointing to where a strange-looking creature with an enormous beak was perched on the arm of a garden seat, in a lonely spot by himself.

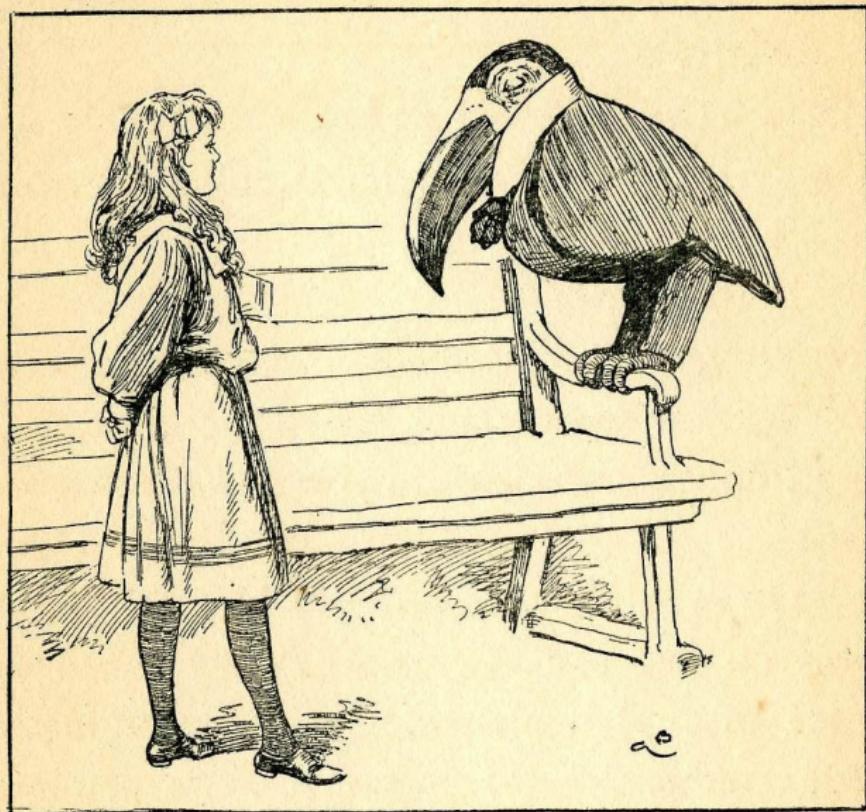
"You'll hear your name called, when you have to recite," he added; "and now I'm off." And Mr. Secretary whisked round, and started back in the direction of the band-stand.

"Oh, stop, please!" cried Girlie. "I must know if—"

But the Secretary-bird, taking enormously long strides, was soon out of sight, and Girlie was forced to return disconsolately to the Toucan.

"He doesn't look much as if *he* could help

anybody," she mused, gazing at the ungainly-looking bird, "and I *do* believe he's



"*I do believe he's asleep too*"

asleep, too," she added, going up and looking at him more closely.

"Hey!" said the bird suddenly, throwing back his great beak, and yawning till it looked as though his head must split in two.
"What?"

"Oh! I beg your pardon," said Girlie, "I thought you were asleep, you know. How do you do?" she added, smiling pleasantly.

The Toucan stared at her suspiciously for a moment before replying, and then said in a husky voice:

"Is that a riddle?"

"Why, no," replied Girlie, laughing.

"What did you say?" asked the bird.

"I only said 'How do you do?'" repeated Girlie.

"Do what?" enquired the bird, with his head on one side.

"I mean," explained Girlie, becoming a little confused,—"I mean, I *hope* you are quite well."

"I hope so, I'm sure," replied the Toucan. "Is that all you have to say?"

"No," laughed Girlie, regaining her composure; "the Secretary-bird told me you wished to see me."

"Well, I *have* seen you," remarked the Toucan, "and there's an end of the matter."

And he closed his eyes and began nodding again.

"Well, I thought it was something important you wished to see me about," Girlie retorted in rather a disappointed voice, for it seemed to be such a very unsatisfactory ending to the interview.

The Toucan didn't reply to this remark, but let his head sink down heavily till his enormous beak rested on the seat.

Girlie waited a moment, but the bird continued motionless.

"Well, I think I'll be going; there doesn't seem anything to stop for," she thought. "I've never seen such a stupid creature before in all my life." And she was just turning to go away, when the great beak flew up once more, and the Toucan gave a gasp and ruffled his feathers.

"Hey! What?" he said, blinking his eyes very quickly.

"I didn't say anything," said Girlie.

"Yes, you did," asserted the Toucan; "you said you thought it was something

important I wished to see you about. So it was."

"Well, what was it then, please?" asked Girlie.

"He-m-m!" said the Toucan, looking very wise, "let me think. I know it was *something*; if it had been *nothing*, you see, I shouldn't have wanted to see you about it, should I?" he asked.

"I suppose not," answered Girlie.

"No, of course not," agreed the Toucan. "I wonder what it was? I have an idea it began with a T, do you know. Just mention one or two things beginning with a T, will you, please; it may help me to remember."

"Tomatoes—Tin-tacks—Time-tables—Turpentine—Tea—Telegraph—" began Girlie slowly.

The Toucan shook his head after each of these words.

"Tambourines—Tickets—"

"Stop!" cried the Toucan; "that's near it. I feel sure it was something like Tickets."

Girlie tried hard to think of something else, beginning with T, which resembled Tickets, but could not recollect a single word.

"I have it," at last exclaimed the bird, who had been sitting with one claw touching his forehead, in a very learned attitude. "It was ninepence," he said.

"But ninepence isn't anything like tickets," objected Girlie.

"Some tickets are ninepence," declared the bird thoughtfully; "I've bought them at the price."

"I see," assented Girlie, though she was not sure that it was clear, and she admitted to herself that she was not supposed to reason things out in the same way as birds do. "Well, what is it, please, that you wish to say to me about ninepence?"

"I've said all I have to say," the Toucan answered shortly.

"But you said it was important," expostulated Girlie, beginning to lose patience.

"So it is," declared the bird.

"But, I'm sure, what you've said isn't of the slightest consequence," protested Girlie.

"Well, give it to me, then," said the bird; "I'll find a use for it."

"For what?" asked Girlie.

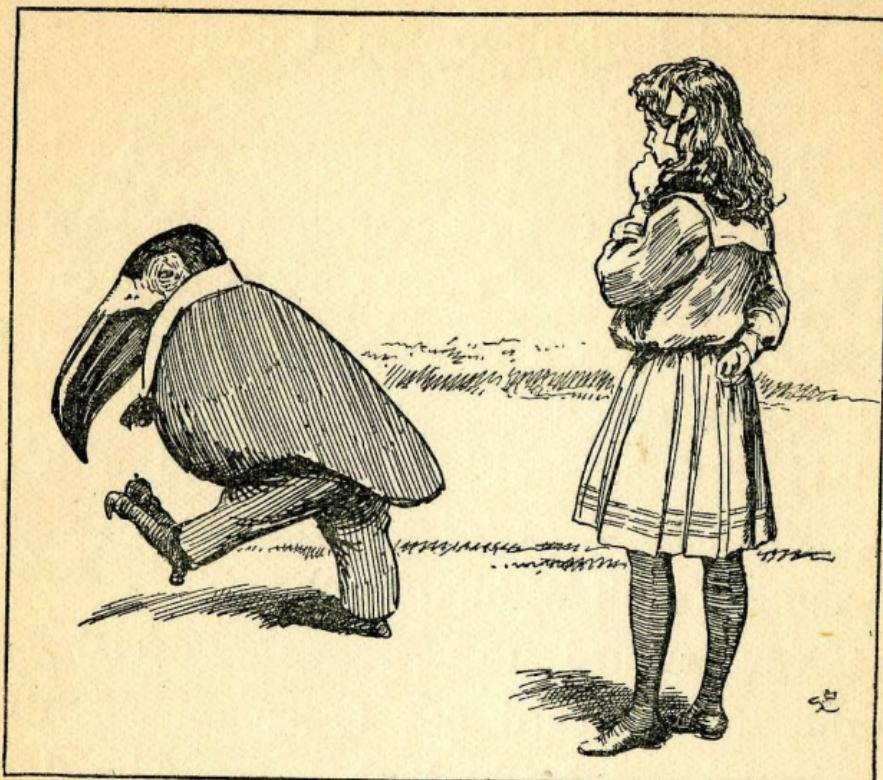
"The ninepence," replied the Toucan; "you said it wasn't of the slightest consequence, didn't you?"

"No, I didn't," declared Girlie; "I said that what you said wasn't of consequence."

"Well, *what I said* was 'ninepence,'" argued the Toucan, "and so, if what I said was of no consequence, and 'ninepence' was what I said, then ninepence is of no consequence—don't you see? That's logic. Ninepence, please;" and the Toucan held out his claw again.

"But I haven't got ninepence," protested Girlie, who began to feel terribly confused, "and so I can't give it to you."

"Very well, then, I shall put it down in my book as a debt of honour," remarked the Toucan, making a memorandum of it, and getting down off the chair. "You will



"You will find it is a matter of consequence"

find it *is* a matter of consequence before long," he said in a warning voice, as he walked off.

"Dear me!" sighed Girlie, who was almost ready to cry, as she sank down on a bank of grass beneath the trees. "*What* a muddle I am getting into, to be sure! What with having to recite and sing before a lot of strangers, and being expected to play upon instruments I have never seen, and to owe

that horrid bird ninepence, I declare I am getting quite bewildered."

"He! he! he! he!" giggled a voice behind her, and, turning round, Girlie beheld an Ant-eater, one of those curious little creatures with a very peculiarly shaped head and a long red tongue.

"How thingular!" he exclaimed with a lisp, when he saw Girlie; "you are the very perthon I wath withing to thee."

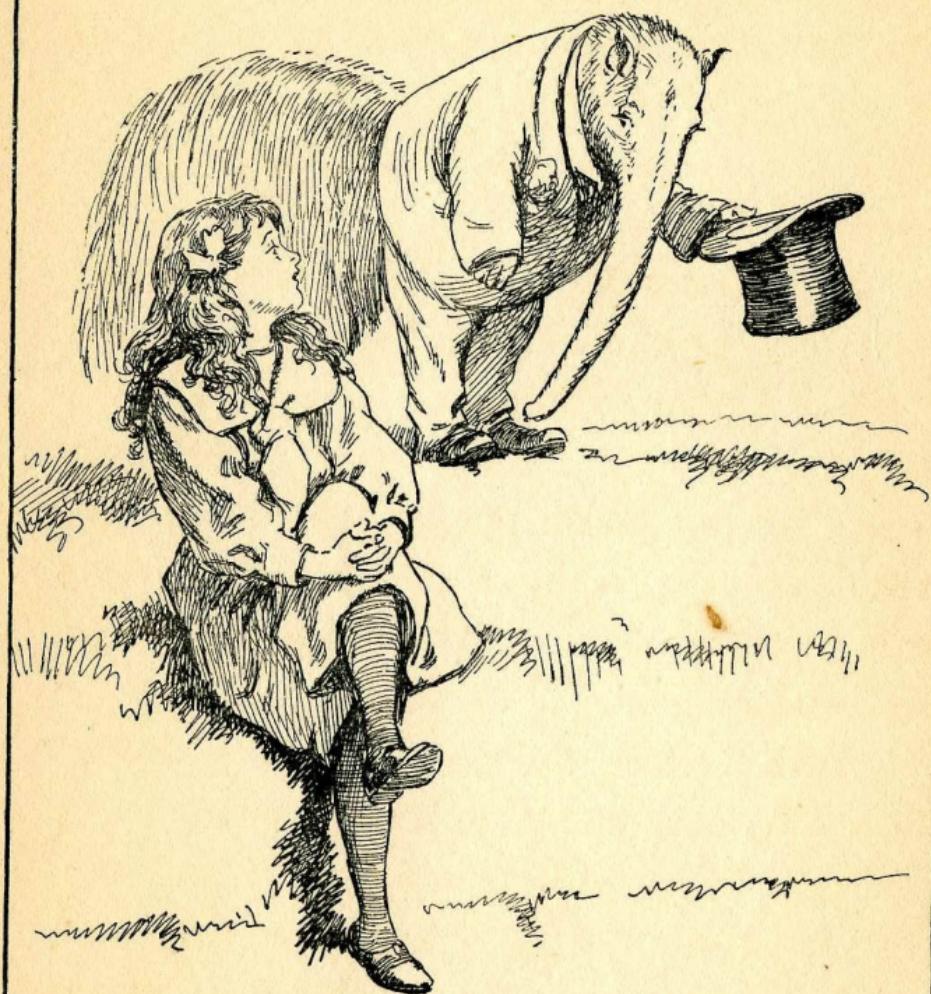
"You wished to see me?" exclaimed Girlie, trying hard not to laugh, for the Ant-eater was really such a funny-looking little chap that she had hard work to keep her countenance.

"Yeth," lisped the creature, "I've thome-
thing of conthequenth to thay to you."

"Yes?" said Girlie enquiringly.

"Oh, I can't thay it all at oneth!" sim-
pered the Ant-eater, turning his head away;
"I'm too thy."

"Oh, don't be shy!" Girlie answered en-
couragingly; "you needn't mind me, you
know."



"He! he! he! he! giggled a voice behind her"

"But it theems tho thilly," said the Ant-eater, giggling foolishly.

"What does?" asked Girlie.

"What I with to thay," was the reply.

"Well, what do you wish to say?" said Girlie speaking softly, trying to give him confidence.

"I—I," began the Ant-eater bashfully, "I with to propothe."

"You wish to propose!" repeated Girlie, laughing; "to whom, pray?"

"Can't you gueth?" asked the Ant-eater, gazing at her in the most comically affectionate manner.

"No, I certainly can't," declared Girlie. "You see I don't know many people here to speak to," she added.

"What would you thay if I wath to propothe to you?" asked the Ant-eater nervously, turning away his head, and looking at her sideways.

"Why," said Girlie, laughing in spite of herself, "I should have to decline, I am afraid. You see, I'm only a little girl, and not nearly old enough to be engaged."

"Oh, *that* not what I wath going to propothe!" said the Ant-eater hurriedly, in a horrified voice. "I wath only going to athk if you would mind thitting nexth to me at thupper, and calling me Thamuel?"

"Sitting next to you at supper, and calling you Samuel?" reiterated Girlie, mortified that she should have been so hasty in jumping to conclusions. "Oh, if that's all," she went on, "I think I may certainly promise to do as you wish! But why are you so anxious for me to sit next to you?"

"Well, you thee," explained the little fellow, "Thuthan ith vexthed with me and—"

"Who's Susan?" interrupted Girlie.

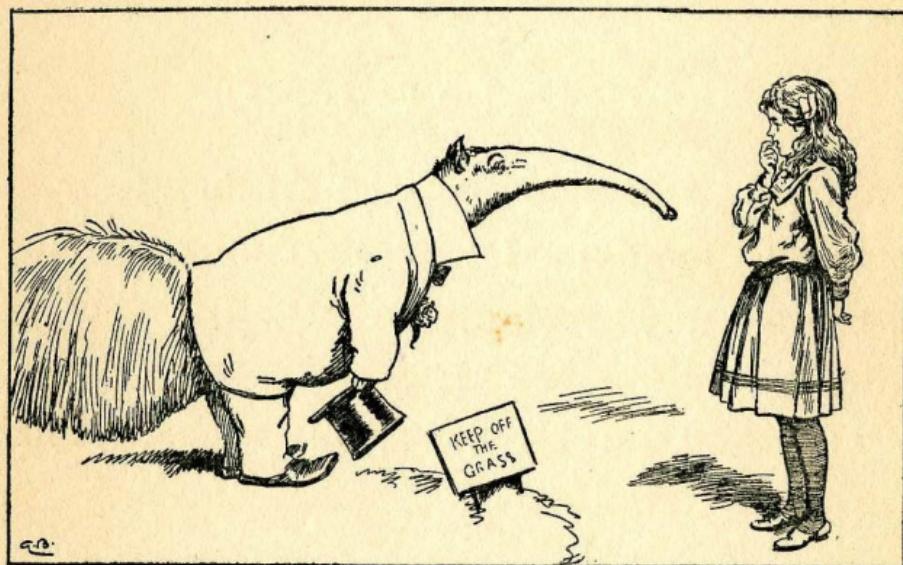
"My thweetheart," confessed the Ant-eater blushing—at least his face turned a sort of blue colour, by which Girlie supposed he must be blushing.

"Well, what has that to do with your wishing to sit next to me at supper?" enquired Girlie, greatly puzzled.

"Why," explained the Ant-eater, "if the

thees me thitting nexth to you, it will make her jealouth, ethpetially if you call me Thamuel, and the will try and make it up with me—don't you thee?"

Before Girlie could reply, a sound of



"I should have to decline"

vigorous clapping came from the direction of the band-stand, and she could distinctly hear a loud voice announcing:

"*The next item on the programme is a recitation entitled: 'The Pelican and the Pie'.*" And immediately afterwards she heard her name being called out in rather an impatient way by the Secretary-bird.



CHAPTER SIX



THE PELICAN AND THE PIE

“Oh, dear me!” exclaimed Girlie, clasping her hands; “they’re calling for me to begin my recitation. Whatever shall I do?”

“Go and rethite, of courth,” lisped the Ant-eater.

“But they expect me to recite ‘The Pelican and the Pie’,” explained poor Girlie, “and I don’t know it in the least.”

The clapping of hands continued, and her name was called again, this time by several voices.

“Oh, dear me,” she thought, “I shall have to go, I suppose! Well, I certainly can’t recite ‘The Pelican and the Pie’,” she mused, as she walked slowly towards the

band-stand, "so I must give them something else. Let's see; shall it be: 'The Wreck of the Hesperus', or 'Mary had a Little Lamb'?" Neither of them has anything in it about a pie, though, or a Pelican either for that matter—Oh! I know!" she thought, stopping suddenly: "'Sing a Song of Sixpence' has a pie in it—and some birds, too. To be sure, they are Blackbirds, but I could easily turn them into Pelicans—'Four-and-twenty Pelicans baked in a pie,' would sound rather nice. Yes, that's what I'll do," she cried delightedly.

Just then the Secretary-bird came hurrying into the shrubbery. "Come along!" he shouted; "we are all waiting for you to begin. There is an immense crowd, for everybody is anxious to hear you."

Girlie could see that he had spoken the truth, for, as they came in sight of the band-stand, she found that it was surrounded by a great number of birds and animals of all sizes, more, in fact, than she imagined the whole zoological gardens contained.

"Here she comes!" they all cried when she came in sight; and the clapping commenced again, more vigorously than before.

"Oh, dear me," sighed Girlie, "I do feel so nervous!"

"Rubbish!" said the Secretary-bird sympathetically; "I don't."

"But you haven't to recite," Girlie replied.

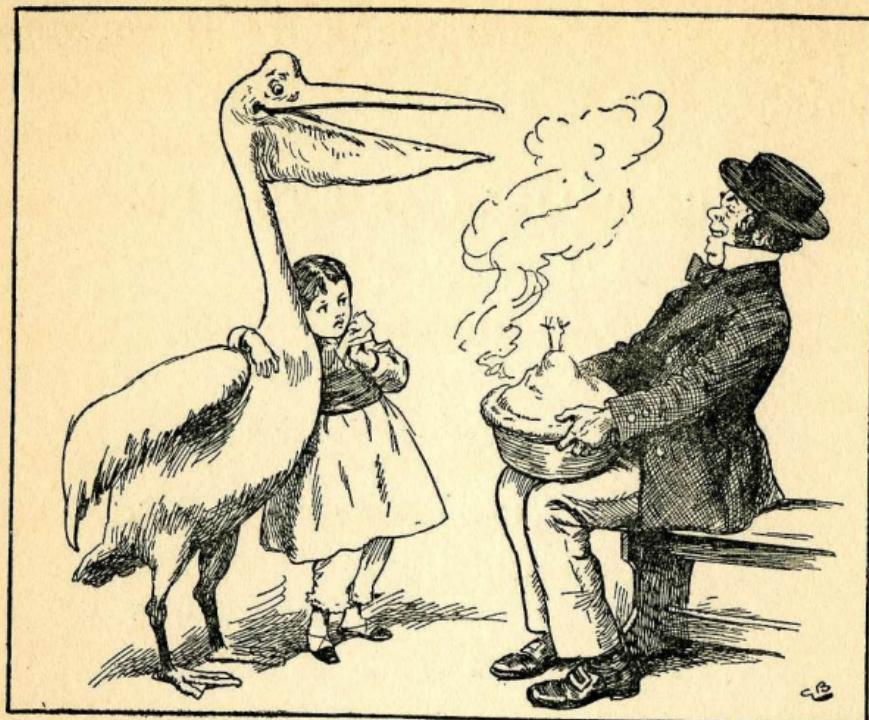
"No, but I have to listen," returned Mr. Secretary; "that's worse."

"Where am I to stand?" whispered Girlie, feeling dreadfully self-conscious as the crowd made way for her to pass through.

"On the platform, of course," was the reply.

And so Girlie mounted the steps of the band-stand, and in a moment stood in full view of the large audience gathered around.

She could see the Toucan perched on the back of a seat in the front row, and to her dismay he remarked, in a loud voice, to an Iguana sitting next to him: "She owes me ninepence." To which the Iguana replied: "Disgraceful!" in an indignant voice.



"Mary had a Pelican"

This incident so disconcerted Girlie that she almost forgot to curtsy before she commenced her recitation.

At first her voice trembled so that she could scarcely be heard; but after several voices had shouted encouragingly: "Speak up!" "Speak up!" she made another effort; though somehow, when she began to speak, she found herself mixing up 'Mary had a Little Lamb', 'The Wreck of the Hesperus', and 'Sing a Song of Sixpence', in the most

confusing and absurd manner. It sounded something like this:—

“THE PELICAN AND THE PIE

“ Mary had a Pelican,
Its fleece was white as snow,
Upon the Schooner *Hesperus*
(A sailing-ship, you know).

“ It followed her to school one day,
But a scornful laugh laughed he,
For the Skipper had taken a little Pie
To bear him company.

“ When the Pie was opened,
(It was against the rule:
It wasn’t thought a pretty dish
To set before a school).

“ It made the children laugh and play,
And water at the mouth,
To see the veering flaw that blew
The steam, now west, now south.

“ ‘Come hither! come hither, my Pelican,’
The Skipper then did cry;
And so the teacher turned him out
With a pocketful of rye.”

To Girlie’s infinite surprise, and great

relief, the ridiculous poem seemed to please the company very much indeed, and they clapped and applauded in the most enthusiastic manner, and a great many of the company cried: "Encore, Encore!"

A party of Macaws and Parrots, however (who were to sing a chorus as the next part of the performance), objected so loudly to this, protesting that it was *their* turn now, that Girlie fortunately got out of having to recite again.

She hurried through the crowd, followed by all sorts of curious remarks from the audience.

"What a charming child!" said one.

"So clever!" declared another.

"And what a delightful recitation!"

"So lucid and clear!" exclaimed a third.

"I assure you I could understand every word of it."

"It's more than I could," thought Girlie.

"There she goes," remarked another to her companion, who happened to be a Red River Hog; "do you think her pretty?"

"Passable," was the reply. "I don't admire that long sort of hair much; bristles are so much more becoming," and so on.

She had got clear of the crowd now, and was walking towards the terrace, when she heard a quick patterning behind her, and, turning around, she saw an amiable-looking Flamingo trying to catch her up.

He carried a flageolet under one wing, and a roll of music under the other.

"*I hope* you will pardon me, for speaking to you without an introduction," he began, "but I feel that I must come and congratulate you on the success of your charming recitation—everybody is delighted with it."

"Oh, thank you!" said Girlie. "I was afraid that it was very bad indeed."

"Oh, no, I assure you!" declared the Flamingo. "A little obscure, perhaps, and above the heads of some of the audience—we are obliged to have a very mixed lot here, you know,—but to the educated amongst us it was an intellectual treat."

"Oh, really!" said Girlie, blushing at what she felt was unmerited praise. "I am afraid you are flattering me."



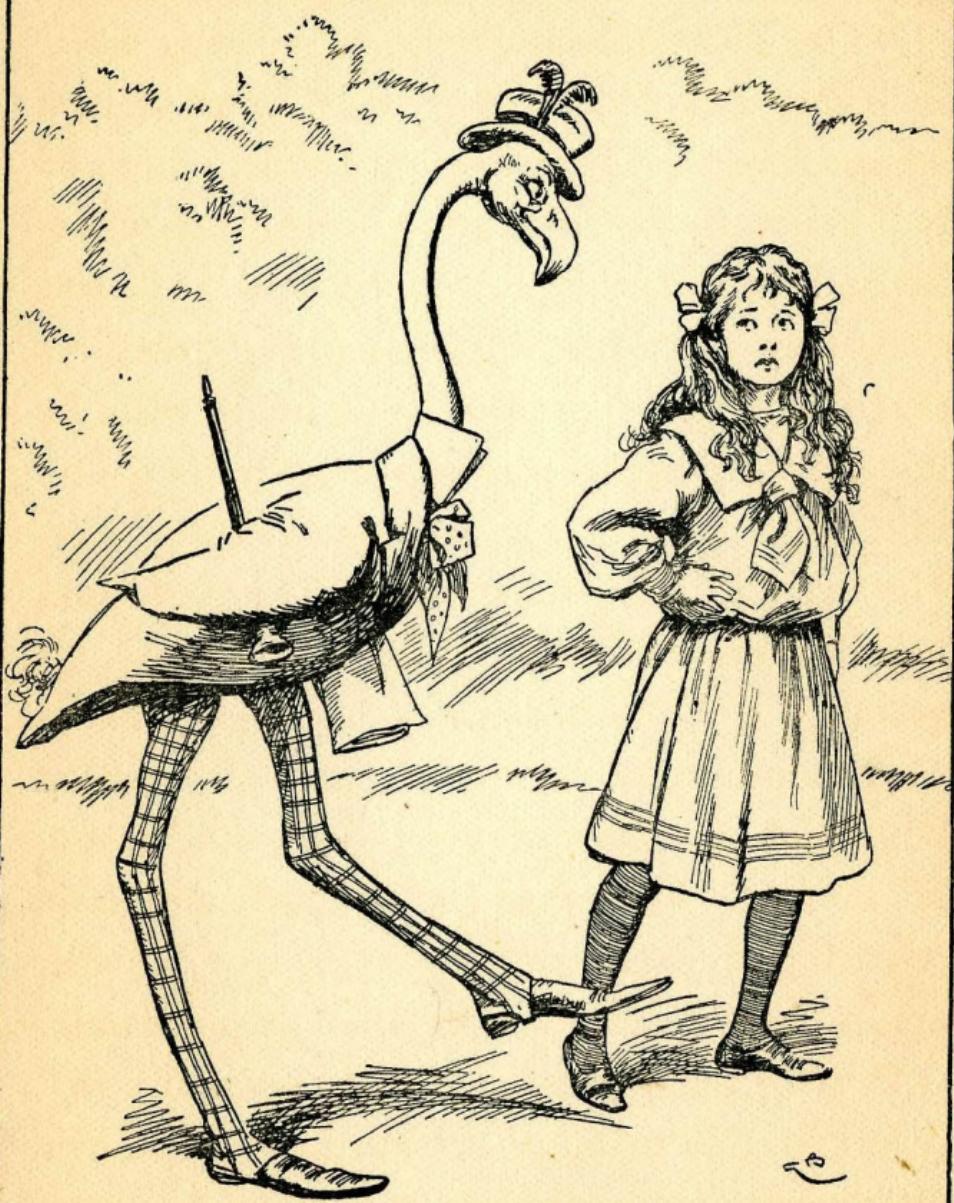
"Do you think her pretty?"

"Oh, no, not at all!" protested the Flamingo. "It was really remarkably deep. I confess to being unable to understand some parts of it myself; for instance, would you

mind explaining to me *exactly* what a ‘veering flaw’ is? ‘The veering flaw did blow’ —you remember the line, don’t you?”

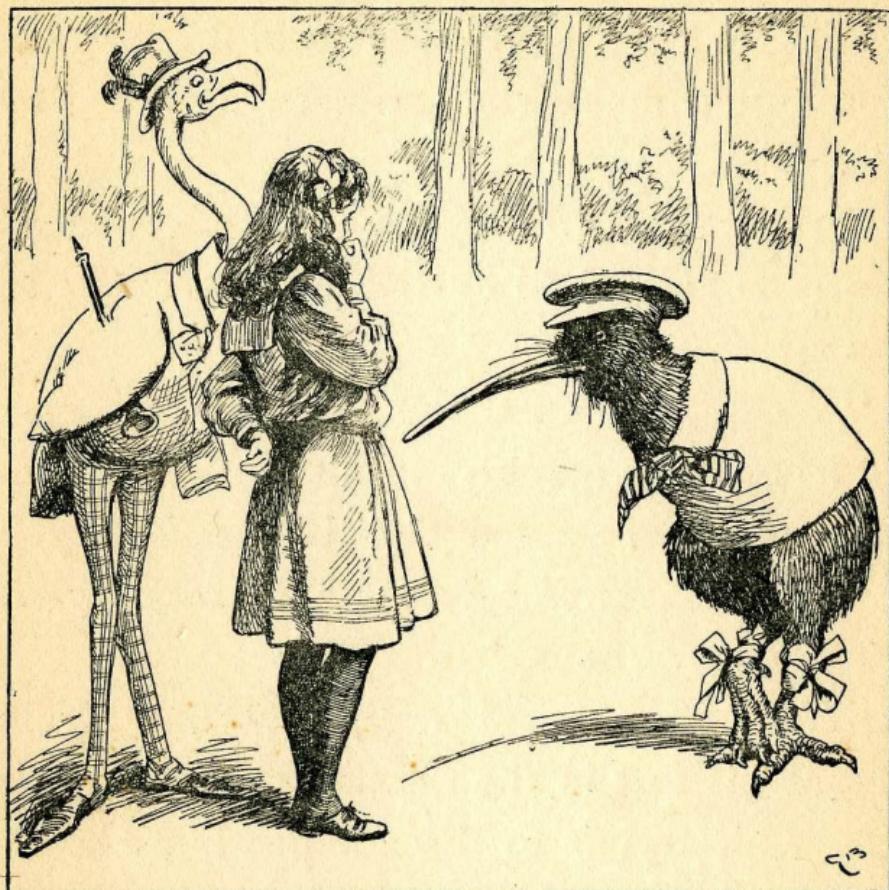
“Oh, *I* can tell you what a ‘veering flaw’ is,” said a voice at their side; and a bird stepped forward from behind a tree, where he had evidently been standing, and from where he had overheard the conversation. He was one of the most remarkable-looking creatures that Girlie had ever seen. To begin with, he had no wings at all, an enormously long and thin beak, and large, clumsy-looking feet. He was covered with a mass of ragged-looking feathers, and wore a number of brightly-coloured ribbons tied round his legs. These were continually getting in his way, so that he stumbled forward every now and then, sticking his beak into the ground, and only releasing himself, and getting on to his feet again, after a considerable amount of trouble.

“*I* can tell you what a ‘veering flaw’ is,” repeated this strange creature, whom Girlie afterwards discovered was called the Apteryx, and who came from New Zealand.



"I hope you will pardon me"

"I don't think it is at all polite of you to interrupt our conversation in this way," said



"I can tell you what a 'veering flaw' is"

the Flamingo haughtily.

"Well, *you* spoke to her without an introduction," declared the Apteryx. "Why shouldn't I?"

"Oh, don't quarrel, please!" said Girlie.

"I'm sure we shall be very pleased to hear what a 'veering flaw' is, if you will kindly tell us," she added.

"There you are, you see," said the Apteryx tauntingly, making a grimace at the Flamingo.

Girlie was afraid they were going to quarrel again, so she asked hurriedly: "What is it, please?"

"Well," explained the Apteryx, "to *veer* is to hop very quickly, in all sorts of directions at once; and a *flaw* is a defect, you know; so a *veering flaw* is a *hopping defect*. Do you see?" he added.

Before they could reply, he had again caught his feet in the ribbons tied round his legs, and, trying to disentangle himself, he skipped round and round in the most diverting manner.

"I know now how it was that you knew what it meant," said the Flamingo, when, after twisting and turning about for some time, the Apteryx at last disentangled himself.

"Why?" demanded the bird.

"Because you are one," was the reply.

"One what?"

"A '*veering flaw*'," said the Flamingo mockingly.

"I'm a '*veering flaw*'?" cried the Apteryx.

"Yes, I'm sure you are a '*hopping defect*', you know."

"Oh, indeed!" shouted the bird, ruffling up his feathers and looking very angry. "Very well then, I challenge you to a duel; come on," and he rushed at the Flamingo furiously.

"Don't be absurd," cried that creature. "You don't suppose I'm going to fight with a '*hopping defect*', do you? Why, you haven't any wings," the Flamingo remarked tauntingly.

"Oh, please, please don't quarrel!" pleaded Girlie, who was terribly alarmed at the turn affairs were taking; but to her great relief, at this moment another creature came up, evidently attracted by the noise.



CHAPTER SEVEN



A GNU SONG

THE fresh arrival was a most singular-looking animal. He had a mane like a horse, thin legs like a stag, and a very ugly head, with curious curved horns sweeping downward over his face and nearly hiding his eyes.

“ May I join this happy little party? ” he asked, beaming pleasantly upon them.

“ Ah!—er—I don’t think I have the pleasure of knowing you,” said the Flamingo, a little stand-offishly.

“ Why, it’s the Gnu, isn’t it? ” asked Girlie, who had been to the menagerie so frequently that she could recognize most of the animals.

“ Oh, I’m not the Gnu that you knew, my

dear, I'm the new Gnu!" smilingly answered the creature.

"Really!" exclaimed Girlie. "What has become of the old one?"



"I'm not the Gnu that you knew"

"He's dead," said the Gnu solemnly. "He had something the matter with his brain, I think. Well, really, it was enough

to turn it when you come to think of it."

"What?" enquired Girlie.

"Why, not knowing how to spell his own name," said the Gnu.

"Was there any doubt about it, then?" asked Girlie anxiously.

"Why, yes," responded the Gnu. "You see, there are ever so many ways of spelling our name, and they're all pronounced alike. There's *Gnu*, to begin with, and *Knu*, and *Pnew*, and *New*, and *Knoo*, and *Gnoo*, and *Pnu*, and *Nue*, and *Knew*, and *Gnue*, and *Pnoo*, and *Nu*, and *Gnew*, and *Knue*, and *Pneu*, and *Noo*, and *Gneu*, and *Kneu*, and *Pnue*, and *Neu*; but I can't give them all. Now if that isn't enough to drive anybody crazy I don't know what is."

"Yes, you seem to be very delicate creatures," agreed the Apteryx mildly. "I once knew a Gnu who had neuralgia, pneumonia, and numismatics all at the same time," he added.

"I didn't know before that numismatics was a disease," said the Flamingo.

"Nobody said it was," retorted the Apteryx.

"You said he had neuralgia, pneumonia, and numismatics," rejoined the Flamingo.

"Well, people can have other things besides diseases, can't they?" replied the Apteryx. "Besides, I've had numismatics myself; they're delicious," he went on defiantly.

"What are they, then? Something to eat?" asked the Flamingo eagerly.

"Oh, let's change the subject!" replied the Apteryx, yawning; and Girlie came to the conclusion that it was only his artful way of getting out of explaining what the word 'numismatics' meant. "I don't believe he knows himself," she thought.

"Can you *do* anything?" asked the Flamingo, somewhat abruptly, at this point, addressing the Gnu.

"I can sing a little," he admitted.

"Oh, do, do please!" cried Girlie; "I should so like to hear a Gnu sing."

"Shouldn't it be a Gnu song?" asked the

Flamingo. "It sounds incorrect, somehow, to speak of a Gnu sing."

"I didn't mean n-e-w, you know; I meant G-n-u," explained Girlie.

"But they are the same," protested the Flamingo; "it is not good grammar to speak of a Gnu sing," shaking his head violently.

"Now I—"

"It's all right," interrupted the Apteryx; "why shouldn't the Gnu sing a new song?"

"Oh, please," interjected the Gnu, "please do not pursue the subject; it is quite bewildering. Let me get on with my song, if I am to sing it."

"Oh, yes, please do!" cried Girlie; and, forming a little semicircle, they all sat down at the Gnu's feet and waited for him to commence.

"It's a little thing of my own, called, 'Always—keep—a—civil—tongue—in—your—head—and—remember—that—to—rise—should—ever—be—your—chief—aim—in—life—besides—which—it—is—often—better—to—trust—to—your—own—judg—ment—than—to—rely—upon—the—opinion

—of—others.” He finished breathlessly, not having stopped or taken breath during the entire sentence.

“Oh, dear me!” exclaimed Girlie; “is



“They all sat down at the Gnu’s feet”

all that the title of the song?”

“Yes,” replied the Gnu; “though you may call it ‘The Swelled Head’, if you prefer,” he added simply, and then commenced singing:

“I’ll sing a song about a man
Who lived in Timbuctoo,
Though *how* he lived, and *when* he lived,
I’ll not relate to you.



“His head grew big, and bigger still,
And bigger every minute;
Yet, when ‘twas pointed out to him,
He said: ‘*There’s nothing in it.*’

“And fat it grew, and fatter still,
More fat, and even fatter;
Yet if a body mentioned it,
He said: ‘It does not matter.’

“It swelled, and swelled, to such a size,
The man grew nearly blind;

But still to everyone he said:

‘Indeed, *I* do not mind!’

“No hat, in all far Timbuctoo,
This monstrous head would fit;
Yet, when his neighbours grieved at this,
He said: ‘Don’t mention it.’

“And still it grew, and grew, and grew,
Till all became alarmed;
But he replied to all their fears:
‘Believe me, *I* am charmed!’

“And when at length it grew so big
That people, in the dark,
Mistook him for a hansom cab,
He murmured: ‘What a lark!’

“At last the man light-headed grew,
And rose up in the air;
And as he hovered high above,
He shouted: ‘I don’t care!’”

The Gnu paused, and afterwards added,
in a soft, melancholy voice:

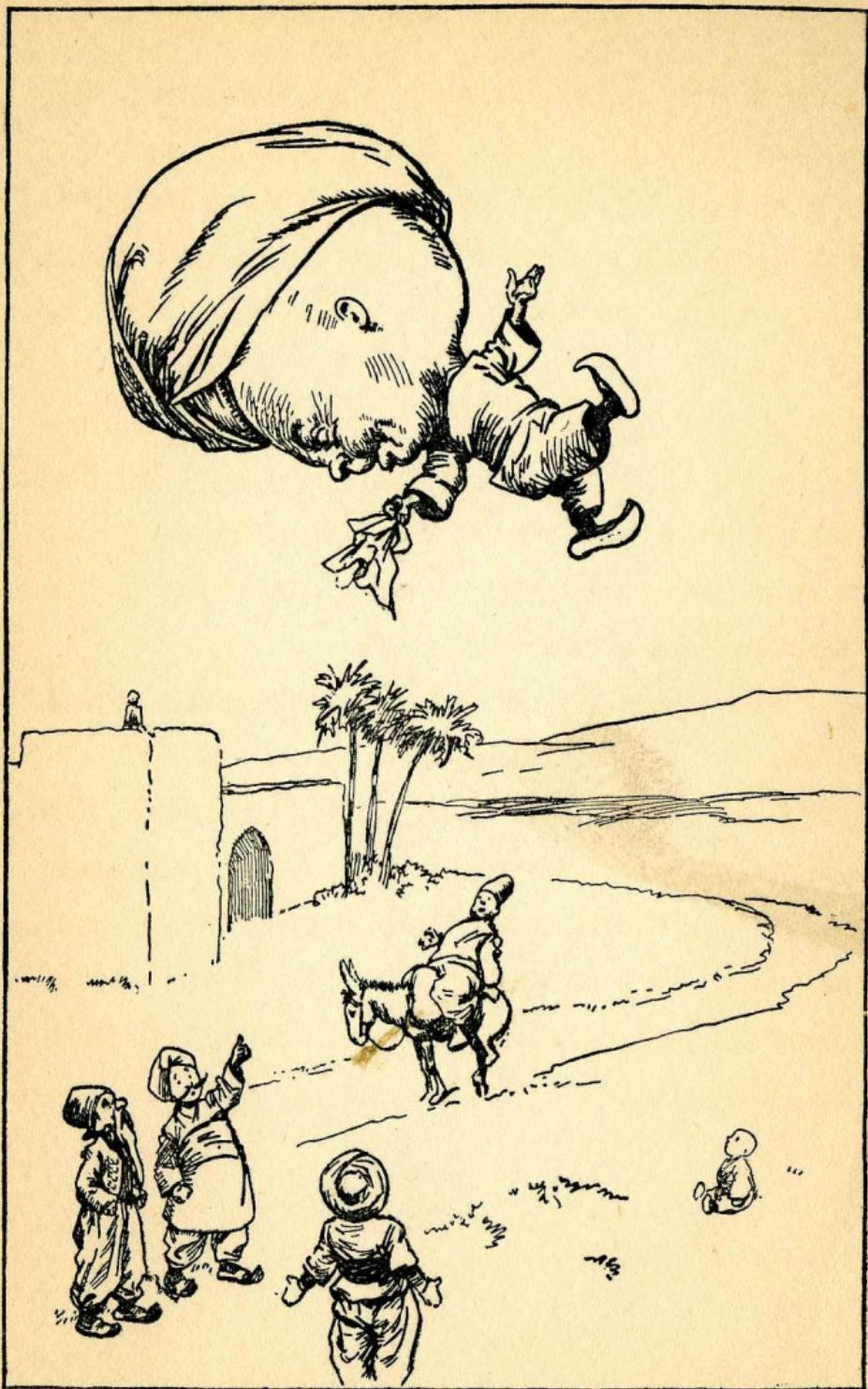
“Then slowly, in the dim far west,
He disappeared from view,
And with a red silk handkerchief
Politely waved adieu!”

Here the Gnu became so overcome with emotion that it was really quite pathetic to see him. Girlie was just trying to comfort him, when the Alligator in livery came hurrying up, and, speaking in a loud whisper, said to her:

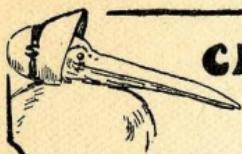
“If you please, Miss, Mr. Lion wishes to know if you would mind going to the station now to meet Mr. Mullingong, as he has quite forgotten which station he is expected to arrive at.”

“But if *he* doesn’t know, however am I to do so?” asked Girlie, quite puzzled.

“I don’t know, I’m sure,” replied the Alligator, scratching his head in a dubious way; “perhaps you had better come and ask Mr. Secretary-bird.” So Girlie bade adieu to her new friends and returned with the Alligator.



"And rose up in the air"



CHAPTER EIGHT



TO MEET MR. MULLINGONG

THE Secretary-bird was sitting beside the Toucan, under the trees, when Girlie came up.

"Oh, there you are!" he observed. "You had better go and meet Mr. Mullingong now, hadn't you?"

"But—where am I to go to?" asked Girlie.

"That's your affair," answered the Secretary-bird unconcernedly.

"Of course," agreed the Toucan, "decidedly her affair."

"But how can I go, if I don't know where to go to?" enquired Girlie, beginning to feel rather irritated.

"You shouldn't have undertaken to meet him, then," said the Secretary-bird indifferently.

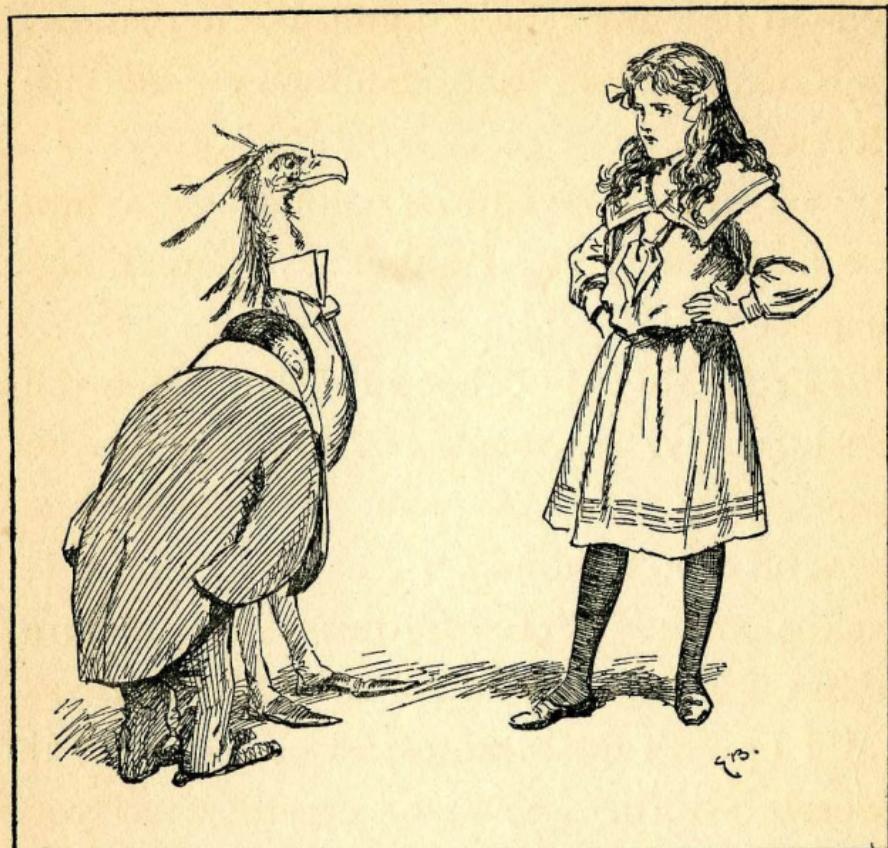
"No; why did you say you'd meet him if you knew you couldn't?" echoed the Toucan.

"But I didn't——" began Girlie, when the Secretary-bird interrupted: "How was the invitation worded, do you remember?" he asked of the Toucan.

"Mr. and Mrs. Leo request the pleasure of Miss Girlie's company *to meet Mr. Mullingong*," said he in a monotonous voice. "I remember telling you to be careful what you said, at the time."

"Yes, that was it," said the Secretary-bird, after thinking for a moment. "That was what was written on your invitation-card, you know," he added severely, addressing himself to Girlie. "If you *couldn't* meet Mr. Mullingong you shouldn't have said you could."

"No, you shouldn't," interjected the Toucan; "it's wicked to tell stories."



"But where am I to go?"

"But I didn't know you meant that," sighed poor Girlie.

"Well, you should—" began the Toucan.

"Hold your noise," snapped the Secretary-bird, "for a moment." Then he went on, addressing Girlie quite coldly. "The words seem to me to be perfectly plain. I

can't think what else you could possibly understand them to mean. You were invited here to *meet* Mr. Mullingong, and you accepted under those conditions. I don't see how you can get out of it. You'll have to go and meet him somewhere or other."

"Precisely so!" echoed the Toucan, laughing hoarsely. "*Somewhere* or another, *somewhat*."

"But who is he? Or what is he, rather?" cried poor bewildered Girlie; "I must know whom I am going to meet."

"I haven't the slightest idea," rejoined the Secretary-bird.

"Neither have I," interpolated the Toucan, yawning, "not the slightest idea."

"He's either a bird or an animal," said the Secretary-bird.

"Or vice versa," declared the Toucan wisely; "probably vice versa, I should say."

"I know he has a duck's bill," ventured the Secretary-bird, "because one of his names is *Ornithorhynchus*, which is Greek for 'bird's snout', you know."

"Then it must be a bird," assented Girlie; "come, it's something, at any rate, to know even that much."

"Who said it must be a bird?" demanded the Toucan.

"Why, didn't the Secretary-bird just say he had a bill like a duck, and how can that be if he isn't a bird?" asserted Girlie.

"Well, you've got a bill, and you're not a bird, are you?" The Toucan uttered the words low and impressively.

"I have a bill?" gasped Girlie in surprise.
"I'm sure I haven't!"

"Yes, you have; you owe me ninepence, you know," the Toucan reminded her.

"Oh, that!" said Girlie; "but that isn't the same sort of bill, you know."

"Besides, he has fur; I happen to know that much about him," continued the Toucan, reverting to the subject of Mr. Mullingong.

"Then he *can't* be a bird," exclaimed Girlie in despair. "I declare, it's very puzzling!"

"Yes," exclaimed the Secretary-bird, "puzzling! that's the very word; for *Paradoxus* is the Latin for the creature, and *Paradoxus* means 'puzzling'. I declare you ought to have no difficulty in finding him out, now we've given you so much information about him."

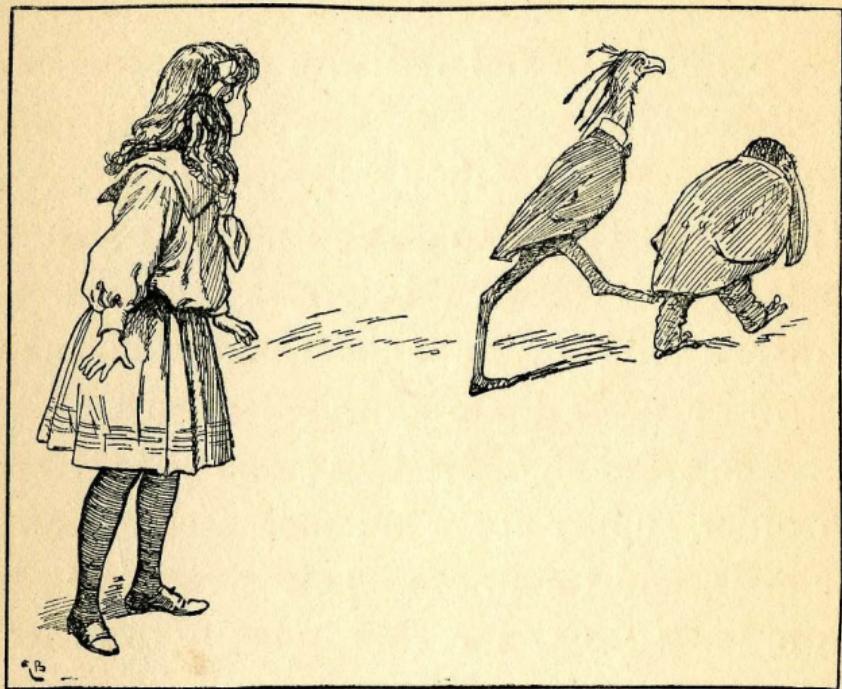
"If she can't find him now, she must be positively stupid, that's all I can say," asseverated the Toucan, moving off, while the Secretary-bird prepared to follow him.

"Remember," remarked Mr. Secretary-bird to Girlie, in an impressive voice, "everything depends upon your bringing him back with you. Oh, and by the by!" he added, as an afterthought, "you might as well order supper to be sent at once; the animals are beginning to get hungry, and if they are not fed soon they may become unmanageable. In that case I won't be answerable for the consequences. So order supper at once, please."

"But where?" shouted Girlie wildly, for the Secretary-bird was hurrying away after

the Toucan. "Where, and how much am I to order, and from whom?"

"Oh, at the usual place!" the Secretary-



"How much am I to order?"

bird called back; "and be sure not to order too much."

"Nor too little," chimed in the Toucan, who had turned around at the same time as his friend, and was waiting for him to catch up.

Before Girlie could ask another question they had both hurried down one of the side-

paths, and, half-flying and half-running, were quickly out of sight.

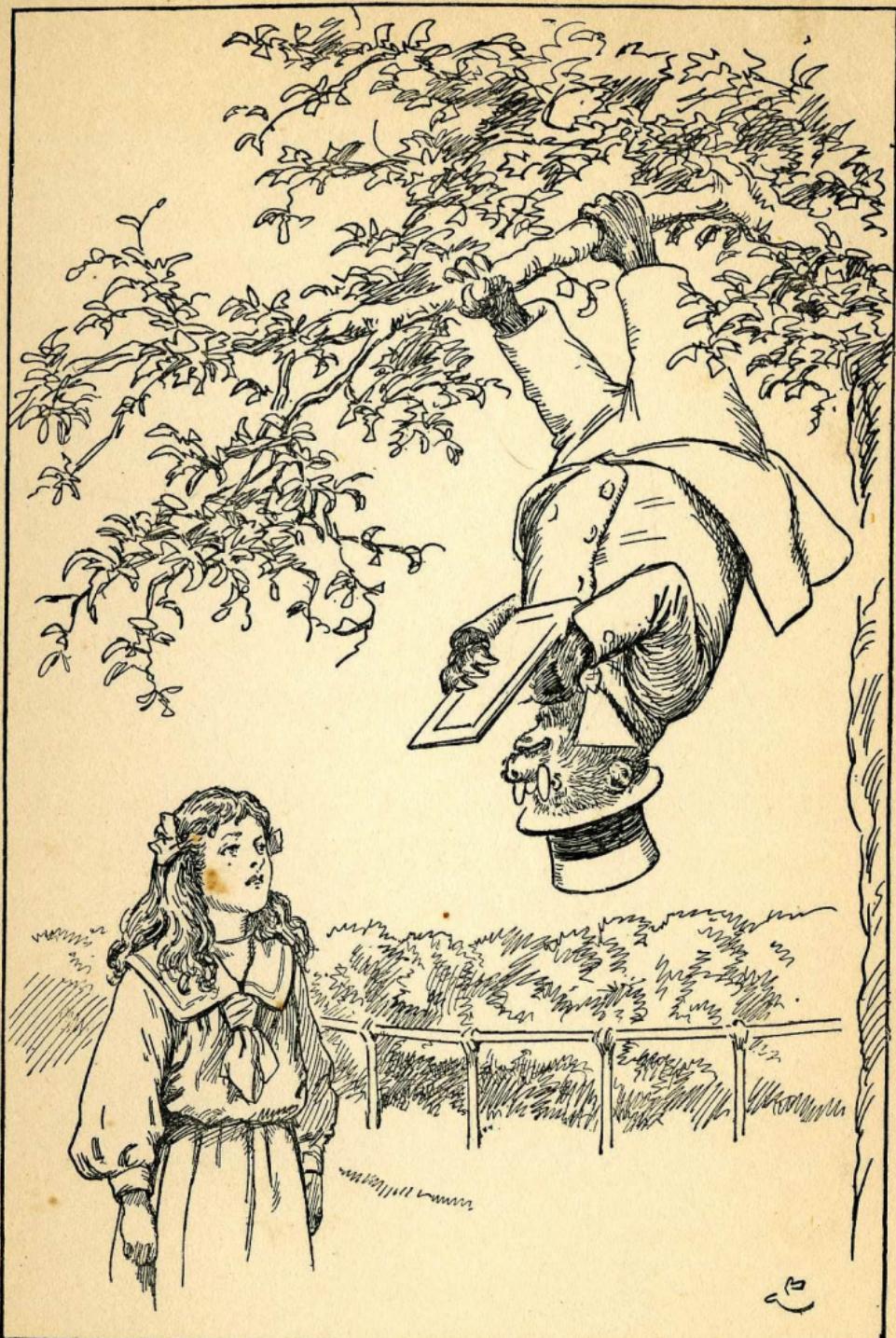
Girlie sat down under one of the trees and tried to collect her scattered senses, for she was perfectly bewildered with all these commissions.

“Let’s see,” she thought with a long sigh: “first of all I have to go and meet a creature that I’ve never seen before, and which is either a bird or an animal, or both, and *where* or *when* I am expected to meet him I haven’t the slightest idea; and then I am to order supper for a number of birds and animals, and I am not told either where I am to order it from, nor what quantity to order. I declare it’s too bad!”

“Prove it,” said a voice overhead; and, looking up, Girlie saw a Sloth hanging from the branches of a tree, holding a slate, with a pencil tied on to it, towards her. “Prove it,” he repeated, “I should like to see it down in black and white.”

“What?” exclaimed Girlie.

“Why, you said it was *too* bad, didn’t you?



"'Prove it', said a voice overhead"

You should be able to prove it, if what you say is true. How much too bad is it?" he asked anxiously.

"Oh, ever so much!" Girlie answered, sighing again.

The Sloth hung from two feet and held the slate in one of his fore-paws, and the pencil in the other.

"'Ever so much' is rather a lot," he said doubtfully. "I don't think I can do compound sums. However I'll try; I'll put it down. 'Too bad' from 'ever so much,'—let's see,—*too* from *much* leaves—leaves—er—er—dear me how much *is* much—I've forgotten for the moment?"

"Why, it's ridiculous," declared Girlie; "you'll never be able to make a sum of it. Besides, what is the use if you do?"

"I don't know," said the Sloth; "it *will* be a bother, won't it? So perhaps, after all, we had better leave it. I *should* have liked to prove it though," he added regretfully. "Let's see, *what* was it you said—'It's too bad,' wasn't it?"

“Yes,” replied Girlie.

“It’s *very* difficult to prove,” the Sloth muttered, looking at his slate in a puzzled manner, “I can see that. But stop a minute though,” he added; “what’s too bad? I forgot to ask you that; it may make all the difference.”

“Why,” explained Girlie, “I’ve got to find the Mullingong, and——”

“Oh, that’s easy!” interrupted the Sloth. “He’s in the box in the keeper’s house. He came this morning; I saw him.”

“Oh!—where—where is the keeper’s house, please?” cried Girlie.

“At the end of the path,” was the reply, “and the door’s open.”

“Thank you very much!” replied Girlie, hurrying off.

“Hi! stop!” shouted the Sloth. “What’s the other thing?”

“Why, supper, you know,” Girlie called back. “I have to order it, and I don’t know, how many for, nor what to order, nor anything.”

"Ask the Mullingong," said the Sloth, slinging the slate around his neck, and clinging to the branch with all four paws again; "he'll tell you."

Girlie thanked him once more, and ran off towards the keeper's house a little more relieved in her mind.



CHAPTER NINE



IN THE MAZE

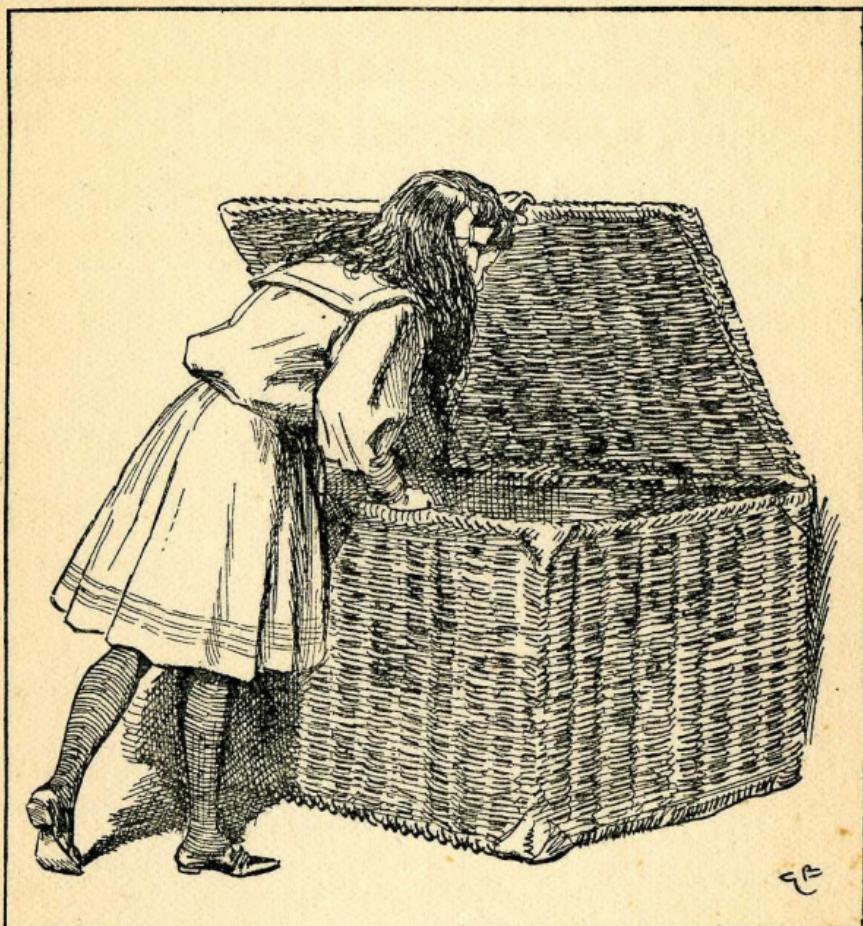
BEFORE Girlie had gone very far she saw the keeper's house, with the door open, as the Sloth had said.

She hurried forward and peeped in. A large square wicker basket stood at one end of the room, and this Girlie at once concluded must contain the Mullingong.

She raised the lid, which was only held down by its own weight, and saw a singular little creature curled up in the straw at the bottom of the basket.

"This is he," she thought, giving a sigh of relief; for although it had a furry coat, the little object had also a flat bill exactly like a duck's, just as the Secretary-bird had said.

"I beg your pardon," began Girlie; but the Mullingong only gave a startled little



"She raised the lid"

squeak and tried to bury its head in the straw.

"Why, it's frightened!" exclaimed Girlie. "Don't be alarmed," she murmured; "I wouldn't hurt you for anything;" and she put

out her hand to stroke the little creature's fur.

The Mullingong, however, had no intention of responding to these friendly overtures, and withdrew to the farther corner of the basket, and gave a series of agonized gasps.

"Don't you understand English?" asked Girlie, who was beginning to get rather puzzled.

The Mullingong did not reply, but continued to tremble and stare at her suspiciously with two little bead-like eyes staring and shining beneath the straw.

"I've come to meet you, you know," explained Girlie. "They are having a garden-party in your honour. So will you please come back with me?"

There was no reply, except a terrified little squeal, as Girlie stretched forth her hand again.

"Oh, please, don't be absurd!" she said at last, losing patience. "If you won't come back of your own accord I shall have to carry you, that's all."

The little creature still remained silent, so Girlie thought the best thing to do was to try and lift it out of the basket.

"It doesn't look as though it could bite very hard," she reasoned, "so I needn't be afraid of it;" and, despite the creature's struggles and squeals, she soon had him under her arm and was hurrying back by the same path down which she had come.

She had rather a difficulty in holding him in her arms, for he kept wiggling about in a most disconcerting manner, flapping his beaver-like tail and opening and shutting his broad webbed feet, and every now and then throwing back his head and gasping as though he were about to faint.

She was hurrying along, all of her attention taken up by her troublesome charge, when she suddenly heard a cough by her side, and, turning round, she saw a Bactrian Camel (the kind with two humps, you remember) standing looking at her with a particularly supercilious expression on his face.

"You seem to be having rather a trouble

with that creature," he remarked. "What are you going to do with him?"

"Why, you know——" began Girlie.

"I don't know," interrupted the Camel severely, "or I shouldn't have asked. What's he been doing?"

"Nothing that I know of," replied Girlie demurely.

"Then why are you ill-treating him in that manner?"

"I'm not," expostulated Girlie, when, looking down, she could see that the Mullingong had wriggled so far out of her arms that he was hanging head downwards by his tail, 'like a dying duck in a thunder-storm,' she thought.

She made an effort to get him comfortably settled again, but, just as she thought she had managed it, he suddenly sprang from her arms, and disappeared into the shrubbery by the side of the path.

"There," exclaimed Girlie in a vexed voice, "now I've lost him again; what a pity!"



"What are you going to do with him?"

"I should think it's a very good thing," said the Camel with a sniff. "He didn't seem to be very good company."

"You don't understand," Girlie had begun, when just then she heard the little

squeak, which she now knew well, and, without waiting to say anything more to the Camel, she hurried off in the direction from which it came, in the hope of catching the Mullingong again. To her surprise she found herself in a little narrow lane, between two hedges which were a little higher than herself.

“Dear me,” she thought, “I don’t remember having seen this place before! I wonder where it leads to!”

She went on for a while, and then suddenly found herself at a stand-still, the little lane ended abruptly, and she could proceed no farther.

“What a bother!” she soliloquized; “now I shall have to go all the way back again, I suppose.”

This was easier said than done, for, when Girlie tried to retrace her steps, she found that, a little way down, the lane branched off in two directions, and, having chosen one, she followed it till she came to the end, and once more had to try and find her way back,

only to discover, a minute or two later, that she was in an entirely different lane from any in which she had been before.

"Oh, dear!" she sighed wearily, after she had been trying for some time, hurrying from one lane to another. "I must have got into the Maze somehow, I suppose, although I had no idea there was one here. I'm sure I've never seen it before in all the times I've been to the menagerie. I wonder if I shall meet someone who can tell me how to get out! If not, I may be here for ever."

This terrible thought caused her to renew her efforts to escape, and she began running frantically from one lane to another. Presently she heard a patterning of feet, and, looking behind her, she saw a funny little fat bird waddling along as quickly as he could, mopping his forehead (if birds can be said to have such a thing) with a very brightly coloured handkerchief. He hurried up, breathing heavily.

"I'm a Puffin," he announced, somewhat abruptly, when he reached Girlie's side.

"So I hear," said Girlie. "You really shouldn't run so hard. I'm sure it cannot be good for you, especially as you have such a difficulty in breathing."

"When I say that I'm a Puffin," remarked the bird, still dabbing at his forehead with the handkerchief,—"When I say that I'm a Puffin I hope you don't think that I mean that I'm a-puffing; for although I am a Puffin, and my father was a Puffin, and my father's father, all of them were Puffins, a person may be a Puffin without being a-puffing. Although," he admitted with a smile, "I certainly at the present time am both a Puffin and a-puffing, a puffing Puffin, in fact, aren't I?"

"I—I suppose so," stammered Girlie, who was trying to follow this reasoning, and who was beginning to feel a little confused.

"I thought I'd hurry to catch up to you," continued the Puffin, "so that we might be company for each other. We may have to remain here for a very long while, you know."

"Dear me! do you think so?" asked



“‘I’m a Puffin’, he announced”

Girlie anxiously, as they walked on together. "How long have you been in the Maze, please?"

"Oh, about two hours, I believe!" replied the Puffin; "but, bless you, that's nothing; some people are twice as long as that getting to the centre."

"What is the use of getting to the centre?" asked Girlie. "Is there anything to be seen when you do get there?"

"Of course!" answered the Puffin; "that's where we have supper. I think it's rather a good idea, you know. When the supper-bell rings you all enter the Maze, and everybody tries to get to the centre (where the tables are) first. Of course only a few get there at a time, and consequently there is no crowding; and, besides, some people never get there at all, so there is more for the others—and see what a saving that is for the host and hostess."

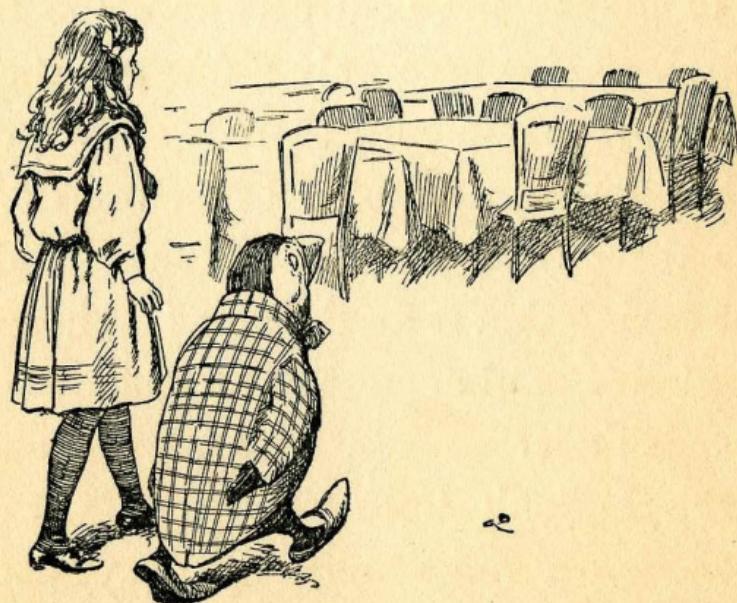
"But it's rather uncomfortable for the guests, isn't it?" asked Girlie.

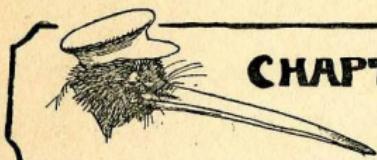
"Oh, I don't know!" said the Puffin. "After supper run a mile, they say, and it's

quite a mile out of the Maze, even by the most direct way, while there's positively *no* objection to their running all the way if they wish to—none whatever."

Girlie was just thinking in her own mind that she preferred the old-fashioned way of going in to supper, when, at the end of a particularly short turning, they suddenly found themselves in a kind of square courtyard. On the grass several long tables were arranged for supper.

"Why, here we are at the centre!" exclaimed the Puffin. "The first two in to supper!"





CHAPTER TEN



GIRLIE USES THE SECOND WISH

BUT where is the supper?" asked Girlie, looking around at the tables, upon which were plates and dishes, serviettes and glasses, and all things needful, but not a vestige of food of any kind.

"Why, *you're* going to provide that, you know," said the bird cheerfully, seating himself at the table, and fastening his serviette around his neck in a way that is not at all polite.

"I am!" exclaimed Girlie, in dismay. "I'm sure I'm not. Why, I haven't anything with me to offer you; I'm very sorry, but I really haven't—not anything at all."

The Puffin looked at her in amazement for

a moment and then he laughed feebly: “ Ha, ha, ha!—what a capital joke! Of course you haven’t—he, he, he!—you couldn’t be expected to carry supper about in your pocket for a whole menagerie full of hungry animals, could you? But you have ordered and paid for it, haven’t you?” he added in an insinuating voice.

“ Well, I’m very sorry to say,” replied Girlie, “ that I haven’t.”

You see, her adventure since the interview with the Sloth had quite driven the matter of the supper she had been asked to order out of her head.

“ But,” gasped the Puffin, flourishing his knife and fork about in an excited way, “ the host, Mr. Lion, told us you were going to provide supper for us; I remember his exact words. He said: ‘ Ladies and Gentlemen, you will quite understand that, with the difficulty there is in procuring food in this neighbourhood, much as I should like to do so, I am unable to offer you supper; but you will be pleased to hear that the little

human creature, who has so delighted us with her beautiful and improving recitation, 'The Pelican and the Pie', has (so my Secretary informs me) kindly undertaken to order



"*Ha, ha, ha!—what a capital joke!*"

for us a sumptuous repast, which will be served almost directly in the Maze.' Of course there was an immediate rush for the Maze, and I don't suppose that there is a single bird or animal in the whole menagerie that is not at this moment on its way here, to the supper which has been promised, and which you will have to provide somehow."

As if to prove the truth of his words, two

Bears, an Armadillo, and a Great Auk arrived simultaneously and hurried to the tables.

They stared very hard at Girlie, and the two Bears whispered together, evidently about her, for one of them nodded his head several times in her direction.

The Great Auk smiled at her very pleasantly, and the Armadillo remarked, in a kind voice, that it was a very fine night.

“These creatures evidently think that I am going to provide them with supper,” thought poor Girlie, “and I don’t know in the least what kind of food they would like, even if I could get it for them. I’m sure,” she mused, “I haven’t the slightest idea, for instance, what is the proper kind of food to offer an Armadillo, and as for a Great Auk, I am certain I should not know what to give him. The bears, of course, could have buns.”

You see, she knew this much because she had so often fed the big Bear in the bear-pit.

Just then some more animals came out of

the Maze, and rushed to secure seats, and then two or three birds, and the Iguana, who carried his tail over his arm, and who



"The two Bears whispered together"

remarked in a loud voice to the Puffin, with whom he seemed to be on friendly terms, as soon as he came into the courtyard:

"She owes the Toucan ninepence; he told me so," and stared at Girlie as though she were some monstrosity.

Other creatures now began to arrive in great numbers: the Elephant family; and the Adjutant, who made a ridiculous grimace as he tried to adjust his eye-glass; the Ant-eater “Thamuel”, and hanging on his arm, and looking up at him in a very affectionate manner, a lady-like-looking Ant-eater, with a white bushy tail—“That must be ‘Thuthan’ who is with him,” thought Girlie, “and I suppose they have made up their quarrel;”—the Porcupine, who came fussing in, making a great noise with his quills; the Camel; and then quite a crowd of “odds and ends of animals” as Girlie described them.

Presently the Lion and Lioness themselves came in, accompanied by the Tigers, the Leopards, and the Panthers. Shortly afterwards the Giraffe strolled out of the Maze, accompanied by the Kangaroo and a Koodoo, and, as he took his seat, complained that he was sure to have a stiff neck or a sore throat, taking supper out-of-doors. “And a stiff neck with me,” remarked the Giraffe

dolefully, "is no laughing matter. It is such a long affair before I get over it."

After a few more creatures had arrived,



"She owes the Toucan ninepence"

and the tables were beginning to get uncomfortably crowded, the Secretary-bird and the Toucan came bustling in, arm in arm.

"There she is," cried the Secretary-bird,

spying out Girlie at once, and hurrying up to her. "Where's the Mullingong?" he demanded.

"I'm very sorry——" began Girlie.

"Don't say you haven't been able to find him," interrupted the Secretary-bird.

"Oh, no, I did find him," said Girlie, "but I've unfortunately lost him again!" And she told the Secretary-bird all about it.

"Dear me, very careless!" he muttered, "very careless indeed!"

"Such a *stupid* thing, to lose a Mullingong!" said the Toucan. "If it had been a collar-stud now, or an ear-ring, or anything of *that* sort, we might have believed you, but a *Mullingong*! Look at me! I don't go about losing Mullingongs. I've never lost a Mullingong in my life;" and he held his head on one side, and made a most ridiculous attempt at looking virtuous.

"Well, I don't make a *practice* of it," exclaimed Girlie rather irritably, for she was beginning to get very tired of continual fault-finding. "You talk as though I had lost

a dozen at least, instead of only one, and he was a stupid little thing at that."

"That's quite enough," snapped the Secretary-bird. "I see you don't realize how serious a thing it is to lose a Mullingong; but, however, that must stand over for a moment. *What about the supper?*"

"Well, you see," explained Girlie, beginning to feel quite alarmed as she looked round at the hungry-looking crowd of animals seated at the tables, "you didn't tell me what to order, nor where to order it; so I didn't quite see how you could expect me to."

The Secretary-bird glanced wildly at the Toucan, and then



"It is such a long affair"

cried: "*She hasn't ordered it!*" in a horrified voice. "Do you know what this means?" he demanded in a very hoarse, worried whisper.

"What is the matter?" asked the host, Mr. Lion, coming up at this moment. "What does all this delay mean? we are all waiting for supper."

"I scarcely like to tell you," began the Secretary-bird, "but she hasn't even ordered any."

"What!" shouted the Lion with a growl.

"What!" snarled the Hyena, who had followed behind.

"What!" cried the Tiger, showing his teeth. "Not ordered the supper after all?"

Most of the animals rose from the table and glared at Girlie. "What!" they all cried. "No supper!"

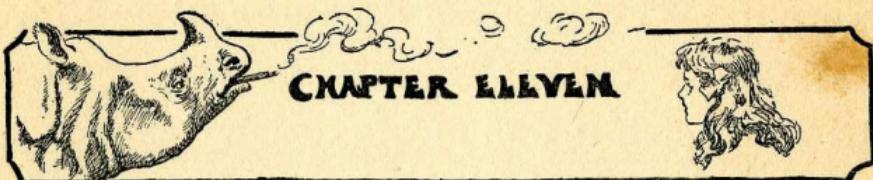
Terribly alarmed at the turn affairs had taken, Girlie exclaimed in a voice that was a little shaky in spite of herself.

"Well, I'm sure I wish—I could supply you with a suitable supper, but—" began she.

The words were scarcely out of her mouth before the tables were suddenly covered with all sorts of delicious dishes, and, singular to say, in front of each animal and bird was a plate containing just the very kind of food to which it was most partial.

In an instant Girlie realized what had happened.

She had used the second of the wishes which the Pixies had promised her should be granted.



THE KANGAROO OBLIGES

THAT was a very clever way of getting supper, I must say. How did you manage it?" asked the Secretary-bird, when everybody had settled down to the tables, and Girlie had found a vacant place between him and the Toucan.

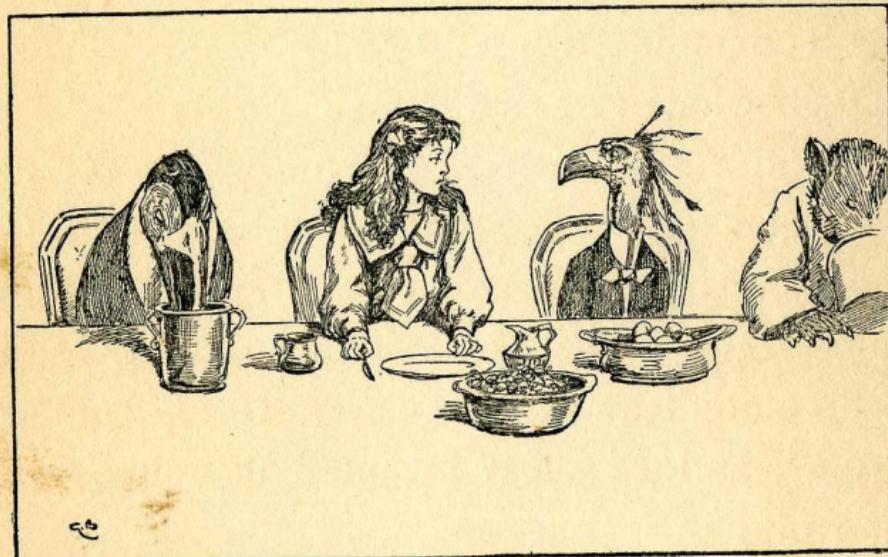
There was a plate of strawberries and cream, and two or three wafers, in front of her, so Girlie began to eat them, arguing to herself that, since she had provided the feast, she might as well enjoy some of it herself.

"How did you manage it?" repeated the Secretary-bird.

"Why, the Pixies, you know," said Girlie, "promised that I should have three wishes

granted, and this was one of them. I must say," she added regretfully,—“I must say, I would rather not have wasted it in this way though, I——”

“Wasted indeed!” exclaimed the Secre-



“How did you manage it?”

tary-bird. “You evidently do not recognize what a serious matter it would have been for you if the supper had not arrived when it did.”

“Yes, it *was* a narrow squeak, wasn’t it?” laughed the Hyena, who sat next to him, leaning across and grinning as well as he

could, considering that his mouth was full of pie.

"*How wide is a narrow squeak?*" asked the Toucan, giving Girlie a nudge. "I suppose you know that much."

"No, I'm afraid—" began Girlie, when the Toucan interrupted her.

"Of what?" he demanded.

"I'm afraid I don't know the answer to your question," she said.

"Pooh! you shouldn't be afraid of a little thing like that," said the Toucan. "Lots of people don't know the answers to my conundrums, and I've just invented this one, you know."

"Oh, is it a conundrum?" asked Girlie, beginning to feel a little more interested. "Let's see. You said: 'How wide is a narrow squeak?' didn't you?"

The Toucan nodded, and Girlie began to puzzle it out.

"If I could find out exactly how wide a *broad grin* was," she thought, "I might compare the two; the narrow squeak would

be sure not to be so wide as that was. Let's say, for the sake of argument, that a *broad grin* is from ear to ear. Oh, bother!" she went on, "I'm sure I shall never do it. I give it up," she added aloud.

"The question is," said the Toucan thoughtfully, "can anybody give up a narrow squeak?" and he appealed to the Secretary-bird for *his* opinion on the subject.

"I couldn't," declared that bird amiably, "not on *any* account. I might give up a squeak," he added reflectively, "but I don't—I don't believe even then that it would be a narrow one."

"Well, what is the answer, please?" asked Girlie, who was beginning to get confused by all these strange reasonings.

"I haven't the slightest idea," declared the Toucan.

"But you said you invented the conundrum yourself," ex postulated Girlie.

"What if I did? I didn't say I'd invented the answer too, did I?" demanded the Toucan. "In point of fact," he went on, "I'm *always*

inventing conundrums like that. There are such a lot of things in the world that want answering, you know. For instance, here's another: 'Where does the fire go when it goes out?' And, 'How sharp is a pointed remark?' I could go on like that for hours and hours," he declared, "and you'd never be able to guess the answers."

"By the by," interjected the Secretary-bird, hurriedly drawing a programme out of his pocket, "I should think it's about time for your song now, isn't it?"

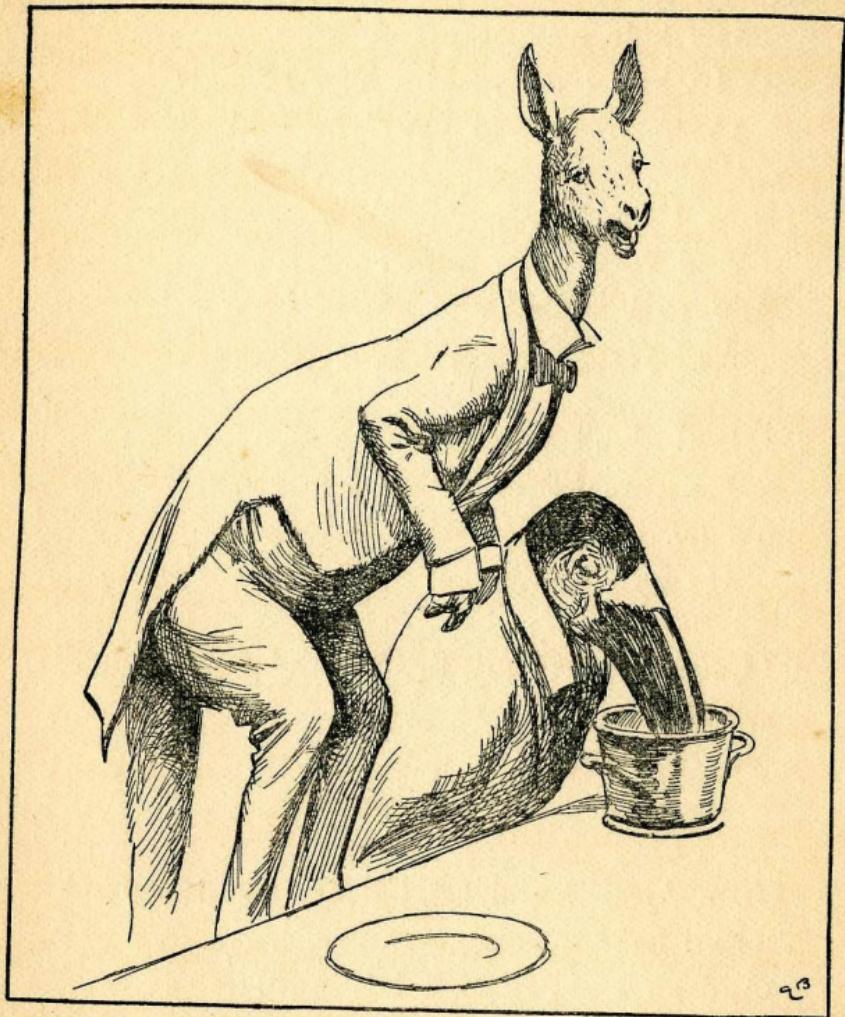
"Oh, I can't sing!" protested the Toucan. "I've got a cold. Ask the Kangaroo; there's a good fellow."

"Or *she* might do something," said the Secretary-bird, pointing at Girlie.

"Oh, no, we shall have quite enough of her with the bagpipes and other things!" said the Toucan somewhat rudely. "Ask the Kangaroo to give us a song."

The Secretary-bird left the table, and presently the Kangaroo stood up, and everybody shouted, "Hush!" and "Silence!"

and then, when all was quiet, the Kangaroo began :



"The Kangaroo began"

“Ladies and Gentlemen, with your kind attention I shall now sing, by special request, that pathetic little ballad,

"THE RED-HAIRED BOY

"I met an errand-boy one day,
His hair was fiery red,
And when I asked him how he did:
‘What’s that to you?’ he said.

"Now I am good, and kind, and mild,
And very, *very* meek;
And so I smiled and patted him.
And yet he cried, ‘What cheek!'

"‘Nay! don’t behave like that,’ I cried;
‘T were better surely far
To treat your elders with respect.’
He only answered, ‘Bah!'

"‘Come! come! my little man,’ I cried,
‘If I’m polite to you,
You too should be polite to me.’
He turned and shouted ‘Boo!'

"Now ‘Boo!’ and ‘Bah!’ are words I hate
To hear a youngster use,
And so I shook that boy until
He trembled in his shoes.

"I picked him up; I threw him down;
I pushed him here and there;
I boxed his ears; I pinched his arms;
I dragged him by the hair.



“Then, though, as I remarked before,
I’m very, *very* meek,
I kicked that wretched youth into
The middle of next week.”

“To Girlie’s great surprise everybody took out their pocket-handkerchiefs and began to weep.

"What are they doing that for?" she asked of the Toucan.

"I don't know," he said, sniffling loudly and wiping his eyes. "It's supposed to be a pathetic song, I believe, and we are doing it out of compliment to the Kangaroo."

"I see," said Girlie. "Well, I think it was horrid of the Kangaroo to treat the boy like that, though he certainly did behave very rudely, didn't he?"

"Boys," remarked the Toucan severely, "are always rude, so that isn't the reason why the story was pathetic."

"Why was it, please?" asked Girlie.

"It was principally because his hair was fiery red," declared the Toucan. "If it had been any other colour it wouldn't have happened, you see."

"Why ever not?" asked Girlie, who couldn't see what the colour of the boy's hair had to do with the matter.

"Why, you see, it wouldn't have *rhymed*, you know. For instance, if it had been black it would have gone like this:

“‘I met an errand-boy one day,
His hair was long and black,
And when I asked him how he did,
He bowed politely back’

Or if it had been brown, you know, it would have occurred somehow like this:

“‘I met an errand-boy one day,
His hair was chestnut-brown,
And when I asked him how he did,
He turned and knocked me down’

Which would have given *quite* a different ending to the story. It’s wonderful what a lot depends upon the colour of the hair.”

The Secretary-bird, who, while this not very lucid explanation had been going on, had been attentively studying the programme, now read out in a puzzled voice:

“*Interval* for supper, and I’ve never had any. I think I should like a piece. I suppose you ordered them,” he asked, turning to Girlie.

“What?” she enquired.

“The intervals, you know,” said the Secretary-bird. “I’ve never tasted one,

and I've been looking forward to having some all the evening,"

"Intervals aren't anything to eat," laughed Girlie, feeling very much amused.

"Aren't they?" cried the Secretary-bird in a blank, disappointed voice. "What are they then?"

Before Girlie could answer, a commotion at the other end of the table caused them all to look round, and they could see that the Giraffe had got up from the table and was anxiously looking over the hedge around the courtyard.

Presently he drew his head back and announced in a terrified voice:

"Here comes one of the keepers!"



CHAPTER TWELVE



THE LAST WISH

THE keepers! the keepers!" shouted the animals and birds, and immediately the utmost confusion prevailed. The creatures jumped up from the tables, upsetting plates, dishes, pies, tarts, fruits, cake, and all the other good things with which they had been loaded.

Then they all rushed to the farther end of the courtyard, and watched the entrance to the Maze with the greatest anxiety.

Presently a man, who was undoubtedly one of the keepers, made his appearance, carrying a lantern, and yawning, and rubbing his eyes as though he were scarcely awake.

"Hullo!" he exclaimed, starting back in

alarm when he saw the crowd of animals.
“What be these?”

The Lion gave a growl, and the man drew farther back.

“Sure an’ I must be dreaming,” muttered he, rubbing his eyes. “They can’t all have got loose.”

“Why not?” demanded the Lion.

“Be-cause—because——” stammered the man, looking perfectly bewildered at hearing the Lion speak, “because it’s onnatural, and for yez to be speakin’ too; sure I can’t understand it at all, at all.”

“Well, *one* thing is certain,” said the Lion, “we’re not going back to our cages until we are ready. Are we?” he asked, appealing to the others.

A chorus of angry growls and yells answered him.

“Ach—no—sor! by no means, certainly not!” cried the man, trembling in every limb. “I wouldn’t be after askin’ yer honours to be doin’ such a thing. It’s only a bit of a creature called a Mullingong that I’m after.

He got out of me basket just now, and I shall get into trouble sure if I don't take him back."

"The Mullingong!" cried the Toucan, thrusting himself forward, and pointing at Girlie. "Why, *she* took him out of your basket while you were asleep, and lost him."

"She's *always* losing them," declared the Secretary-bird.

"And she owes me ninepence," the Toucan went on, making a dab at her with his beak.

"And she ate all the 'Intervals' at supper," added the Secretary-bird, working himself up into a passion.



"*Hullo!*"

"And she played the bagpipes *disgracefully*," shouted another from the crowd; while a voice which sounded remarkably like the Adjutant's added,

"And she—ah—bwoke the musical glasses, don't you know."

"I'm sure I didn't," protested Girlie. "Why, I've never played the bagpipes in my life, and as for the musical glasses, I don't even know what they are."

"But you *did* lose the Mullingong, didn't you?" asserted the Secretary-bird.

"Yes, I did," admitted Girlie.

"Very well, then," said the bird, turning to the keeper. "You'd better take her and lock her up in his place."

"Yes! yes! Lock her up! Lock her up!" shouted all the animals and birds as in one voice.

"In a cage," suggested the Toucan spitefully; "then we can go and poke her with umbrellas and walking-sticks, and make rude remarks about her personal appearance, as the human creatures do about us every day of our lives."



"But you did lose the Mullingong?"

"But——" protested the keeper.

"*Lock her up!*" growled the Lion in a ferocious voice.

The keeper gave one terrified glance, and then caught Girlie's hand and dragged her after him.

"Come on, come on, quick!" he shouted, running as fast as he could, so quickly that Girlie had the greatest difficulty in keeping up with him.

Through the lanes they dashed, first along one, then along another, till presently Girlie became so tired and breathless that she felt that she could really not go any farther; so she threw herself on a bank of grass, and began to fan herself with her hat.

"Ach, sure," said the keeper, listening intently, "I think they're after us again! I can hear them comin'. To think that I should live to be frightened to death in this way!"

He had scarcely finished speaking when first one and then another of the animals appeared round the corner, until the little lane was completely filled with them. They

all looked so angry that Girlie began to get very frightened indeed.

"Oh, dear," she murmured, "I wish—I really do—that I had never come to this horrid garden-party at all! Everything seems to go wrong somehow."

The words were scarcely uttered when a most singular thing happened. The ferocious faces around her seemed gradually to relax into smiles, and one by one the animals *slowly vanished*.

The Lion and the Lioness, the Toucan and the Secretary-bird, "Thuthan" and "Thamuel", the Adjutant and the Porcupine, faded into space; the trees rose into the air, and floated away; and everything about her seemed to change, until presently she found that she was in her own little bed-room at home, while the early morning sun was shining in at the window.

"Oh—oh!" she murmured, half-regretfully, "then it has all been a dream; or," she thought, "perhaps it really has happened, and the three wishes have been fulfilled.



"The animals slowly vanished"

L

Let's see, what was the last one? Oh, yes! I wished that I'd never gone to the garden-



"Then it has all been a dream"

party at all; so I suppose, if it were granted, that I *never did go* there—dear me, it's very puzzling;" and, with half a sigh, Girlie got up and began to dress.

She often went to the Zoo in the Park after

this, and really did make the acquaintance of the Mullingong; but she never saw the Lions and Tigers, and other dangerous animals, without thinking of her adventures, and she always felt thankful to see the bars between her and them, remembering that, but for the Pixies' three wishes, there is no knowing what might have become of her at the strange garden-party at which she had—or had not—been a guest.